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THE APOCALYPSE OF  
==JESUS CHRIST==

AN EXPOSITION

BY

WILLIS W. MEAD

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Unto Him that loveth us,  
And washed us from our sins in His blood;  
And made us to be a kingdom,  
Priests unto His God and Father;  
To Him be the glory and the dominion  
Unto the ages of the ages.  
Amen.



## ERRATA

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Page 28, in twelfth line from bottom, instead of  
"Him" read "him."

" 45, in last line of Note, instead of "πλ" read  
"π λ η ν".

" 86, in second line omit "and Col. 1:26."

" 101, in fifth line, instead of "aften" read  
"often."

" 131, in third line of Note, instead of "tradi-  
tion" read "translation."

" 145, in fifth line from bottom, instead of  
"prince" read "the prince."

" 179, in fourth line, instead of "witnesses" read  
"witness."

" 186, in eighth line from bottom, read (  $\psi \nu$  ).

" 240, in fifteenth line, instead of "became"  
read "become."

" 244, in last line, instead of "Harvest" read  
"Ingathering" (Ex. 23:16; 34:22).





## PREFACE.

These studies were born of a desire to harmonize, in a measure, the conflicting views of Premillennarians, with respect to the order of events in "the time of the end."

The Apocalypse is the best and most complete setting forth in clear outline the events immediately connected with "the appearing of the glory of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ." While it does not duplicate the prophecies found in other portions of Scripture, it supplies the key by means of which their proper place in the divine program of events is seen, so that the scattered teachings of the Bible, on this all-important subject, may be arranged into one connected and harmonious whole.

There are, doubtless, some views here advanced which further study will require to be modified or abandoned. Many traditional interpretations and preconceived theories which have taken deep root in our minds, do often, without our knowing it, mightily resist the Holy Ghost, and make it exceedingly difficult for His testimony to get an unbiased hearing; but if we could divest ourselves of them and of their influence, and allow the Word to speak for itself, there would be much less need of works of exposition.

In the preparation of this work, there has been a desire to lead the student away from dependence upon human interpretations, and back to the Word itself. If in this attempt we seem to have shown scant appreciation of some teachings that have been widely accepted, it has not been from any want of appreciation of the noble men who have preceded us in this field. The question of importance above every other is this: "What is the teaching of Scripture? Does a given interpretation stand the test of the inspired Word?" This is the supreme test; and the reader is urged to apply it to every statement in these pages, and to reject everything that does not square with the teachings of the Bible, without forcing or constraint.

Grateful mention should be made of the kind encouragement and many helpful suggestions of the Rev. Augustus B. Prichard, of Los Angeles, California, who read the greater part of this book while in the manuscript. He should not, however, be held responsible for the views here given, especially as considerable portions were added which he did not see until they came from the press.

We also acknowledge our indebtedness to Prof. W. M. Ramsay for the historical information contained in his valuable work on *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, of which free use has been made in our treatment of Chapters II and III.

A few Supplementary Notes are now added (pp. 339-349) in the hope that they will aid to a better understanding of the references to the Nicolaitans,

in Chapter II, and also of the subject of "The Church," discussed in Chapter V.

An Index is also now added, for which requests have been made. Owing, however, to the fact that the chapters of the Apocalypse have been treated, in this work, in chapters bearing corresponding numbers, this Index is much less exhaustive than would otherwise have been necessary.

New York, September, 1911.



## INTRODUCTION.

One of the most happy and encouraging signs of the time is the renewed interest that is being taken in the study of the Apocalypse. For a long time such a study has been in disfavor. It has been regarded as an unprofitable, or even dangerous, field to enter. No one can estimate the loss to the Church at large, and to individual Christians, which has resulted from such a belief, or rather, from such unbelief. The divine Author of the book speaks positively of the blessing that comes from careful attention to the things which are written in it. And the whole history of its interpretation affords many luminous proofs that those who make a study of it are blessed thereby. Despite the strange vagaries of interpretation into which its expositors have so often fallen, and however unprofitable and misleading those labors may have been to others, the Lord has never failed to bless the earnest and reverent student. Much of the disfavor into which the study of the book has fallen, is due to faulty and unscientific methods employed in its exposition. Other causes also have led to an obscuring of the meaning of the book, rather than its elucidation. Mistranslations have had not a little to do in switching the student off on to a side-track which ended in a wilderness. But preconceived theories have done more to vitiate results. Some who started well and made

excellent progress in the beginning, having found the gate into the King's Highway, soon lost the road, because they were traveling with a vehicle ill-adapted to the narrow way. They were looking for a road that would let *their* chariot pass, and failed to see the way-marks blazed by the Holy Spirit which would have guided them through to the other side.

As in the days preceding our Lord's First Advent, so in these latter days, the meaning of Scripture is greatly obscured by traditional interpretations. How often have simple words of crystalline clearness been left covered, as it were, with an opaque or cloudy film by the touch of man. Interpreters of former days, as though ashamed of the native simplicity and beauty of the Word, attempted to clothe and adorn it with interpretations of their own, many of which have come to be received as a part of the teachings of inspiration. This more than any other one thing, perhaps, has dimmed the light that shines in the last book of the Bible.

It is unintentional, to be sure, yet not more so, doubtless, than it was in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees to whom the Master said, "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your traditions (Mark 7: 9).

In no other statements of Scripture is this more noticeable than in the things concerning our Lord's Second Advent. What, for example, could be more clear and simple than these words of Christ, "Be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not, the Son of Man cometh" (Matt. 24: 44)? This passage needs no interpreter. It means what it says, and it says



what it seems to say. A child can understand it. But the traditional and common interpretation of it is, that Christ is here enjoining upon all to be ready for *death*, because of the uncertainty of life!

We should be unable to suppress our indignation were people to treat our word in the same way, and were they constantly to assume that we cannot say what we mean, nor mean what we say. They assume a grave responsibility who thus take it upon themselves to correct the words of inspiration, and tell us what God *ought* to have said. "He that hath received His witness hath set his seal to this, that *God is true*" (Jno. 3:33). Beloved, have you affixed your seal or endorsement to these three words, GOD IS TRUE? If you have not, your study of the Word will be honey-combed with failure,—the failure that comes from unbelief.

The Old Testament prophecies concerning our Lord's First Coming were fulfilled, *every one of them, most literally*. But the traditional interpretation of those prophecies were then most signally disowned and dishonored by God. And to this day, Israel has not recovered from the awful mistake of rejecting the plain teachings of Scripture, *in order to keep their own traditions*. Let us be warned in time, and apprehend clearly the fact that what He has told us concerning His Second Coming will also be fulfilled *absolutely to the letter*. Away with these traditions! "To the law and to the testimony!" Back to the Word! for "these words are faithful and true."

To distinguish between the symbolic, and non-symbolic, or literal, passages in the Revelation, is not

difficult. It is a safe rule for all who study it, to take it in its literal and obvious sense whenever practicable, and that there should be sufficient and obvious reasons for taking the symbolic meaning when that is preferred. The symbolic portions of the Apocalypse, while few, in the main, are yet numerous enough to remind the student over and over again of his utter dependence upon the guidance and illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. The meaning of the symbolic parts is *not sealed*, but, like many of the richest deposits of gold, lies deeper, and requires more patience and harder work to obtain. And here also, as in other mines, the seeker after "hid treasures" must often dig while on his knees. Let no one be deterred from the study of the Apocalypse by this other tradition of the elders, viz., that it is a mystery, and therefore an unprofitable subject for study. Were that the case, God would not have called it the REVELATION. In this title He has given His word for it, that it is not a sealed and impenetrable mystery, but a store-house of divine knowledge, available to the most humble and unlearned seeker after truth, as well as for the learned and the "doctors of the law." Faith, diligence, familiarity with the other Scriptures, much prayer and careful attention to the keys and sign-posts along the way, will, with the aid of the guiding Spirit, conduct us safely and blessedly past many a point where others have stumbled or lost their way.

## CHAPTER I.

THE last book of the Bible is what it claims to be,—a revelation. The word “Revelation,” like *Apocalypse*, its Greek equivalent, means a *taking the veil away*, or *drawing it back*, so that what had before been hidden may be seen. This book, therefore, is an unveiling, or making known the things of which it speaks. And yet, the book of Revelation is commonly regarded as an inexplicable and inscrutable *mystery*. A mystery is the opposite of revelation, and denotes something that is hidden or unknown.

The true title of this book is not that which stands in large letters at the head of it in our Bibles,—“The Revelation of John,” (R. V.); still less is it “The Revelation of Saint John, the Divine,” as in the Authorized Version. The true and inspired title is found in the first five words of the book, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. This is a divine guarantee that the book is not a profound mystery, an incomprehensible riddle. This Revelation is made by Jesus Christ, “through His angel.” What Christ uncovers He is sure to make plain enough for all His people to understand. It is further said that it was made for the purpose of showing “unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass.”

In this book, therefore, we have the fulfillment of our Lord’s promise in Jno. 16:13, where He says,

"When He the Spirit of truth is come \* \* \* *He shall declare unto you the things that are to come.*"

It is worthy of more than a passing reflection that the almighty and infinite God should reveal to His servants the things which lie in the future. This is what He has done from the beginning. No great judgment has befallen the world without His having previously foretold it; no conspicuous blessing has come unannounced. Much of the Old Testament is devoted to prophetic announcements of events now fulfilled. There is, however, one event, or group of events, yet unfulfilled, which is often referred to in Old and New Testament books, and compared with which, all other events are of minor importance. This is the glorious appearing of Christ and the events immediately preceding it. The prophecies which speak of that event were often as brief as they were obscure. Such, for example, is the one which declares that the seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head (Gen. 3: 15). Many of them, also, were given in such connection with other events that their prime significance was seldom, if ever, properly apprehended. It was for the purpose of giving His people a full and detailed knowledge of those stupendous events, and in order to focus upon them all the scattered light of previous revelations, that our Lord sent His angel "to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass." "Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except He reveal His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos. 3: 7).

Thus at the very beginning of the book, our attention is called to the exceeding importance of its con-

tents. And, as if the Lord would emphasize yet again the necessity of a most careful reading and study of this book, He adds, "Blessed is He that readeth and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein." Words quite similar to these are also found at the end of the book (22: 6, 7). Again, the importance of a diligent study of this much neglected portion of the Word is still further, and most strongly, accentuated by the seven times repeated exhortation, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches." This refers not alone to the special and individual messages to the Seven Churches which are found in Chapters 2 and 3, but also to the contents of the whole book; for the Apocalypse, *as a whole*, was to be sent to all of the Seven Churches (1:11). These Seven Churches have a dispensational significance. Seven is the number which symbolizes completeness and dispensational fulness. The seven-fold repetition of this command, therefore, is to show that the exhortation is in force *to the end of the age*, and is made to those living in every period of the Gospel dispensation.

Since, therefore, this book is a revelation from God to all His servants, what mistake could be greater than to regard it as a riddle, a confusing puzzle which cannot be solved, except, possibly, by a very few? What dishonor is done to the name of God by affirming, as many do, that the study of this book is impractical and unprofitable!

Less objectionable, to be sure, but in the same line, is the ground taken by the historical interpreters. According to them, the things which Christ has re-

vealed or shown "unto His servants" in this book, remain shrouded in mystery, until history, by fulfilling the prophecy, reveals the meaning. If, therefore, their view be correct, Christians living in the first centuries of this era, could derive little advantage from reading and hearing "the words of the prophecy of this book," and so they could not be greatly "blessed."

And, if this were true, in order to study this book aright and understand it in the present day, one would need to be well versed in history; he would need to be familiar with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; he should have read carefully the histories of Mediæval and Modern Europe; he should be well instructed in the histories of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Reformation, and not be unacquainted with the rise and spread of Islam, and the conquests of the Saracens and Turks. Alas for the poor laboring man and the hard-working mother of a family! They cannot buy these books. Few of them could gain access to them if they wished. Even if they had them in their homes, how could they find time or strength to read them? And so they could not be among the "blessed" ones. No, beloved, the blessedness pronounced, is upon "him that readeth," and upon them that hear and keep "the words of the *prophecy*,"—not for those who read human histories. And to his "Blessed is he that readeth," we would respond, Blessed be the Lord for having given us this word of prophecy which is a revelation indeed; not a puzzle, but a book that can be understood by the hard-working man and the toiling woman,—a book that is just what we might expect from him who said "Come



therefore are not altogether such as He desires. Their patience, however, was worthy of praise. Their intolerance of false teachers was also most commendable. They had tested these self-styled apostles and had found them false, and had treated them as such teachers should be treated. Ignatius, a disciple of the Apostles, writing to the Ephesian Church less than a score of years, probably, after the Vision of Patmos, commends them for their loyalty to Christ in this respect. "I have heard," he writes, "of some that passed by you on their way from thence (Syria), bringing an evil teaching, whom ye suffered not to sow seed in you, stopping your ears, that ye might not receive the things that were sown." (Ignat. Ep. to the Ephesians, Chap. 9).

In this they were obedient to Christ who had bidden His followers to "Beware of false prophets" (Matt. 7: 15). During his three years' stay among them, Paul had repeatedly admonished them of the same danger, and in his farewell address to the Elders had cautioned them again (Acts 20:28-31). John, the Beloved Disciple, had also given them the same counsel, a notable instance of which is preserved in 2 Jno., verses 10, 11: "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works."

These things should be pondered well by us in a time when Christendom, has, to such an extent, repudiated these apostolic convictions and practices, and holds it to be a Christian obligation and virtue to be tolerant of those who bring in unsound doctrine, and to be



broad-minded enough to fellowship with them and do them honor.

What was the decline for which the Lord reproves this Church and which is referred to three times in verses 4, 5,—“*thou didst leave thy first love*”; “remember therefore *whence thou art fallen*, and repent and do *the first works*”?

In seeking an answer to this question, let us bear in mind that these seven churches are representatives or types of different *periods* in the history of the Christian Church. The Church in Ephesus, being the first of the seven to be mentioned, is the representative, or exponent of the Christian Church, as a whole, in the first of these periods. This Letter to Ephesus, therefore, is also a message,—a *prophetic burden*, to the *whole Christian Church of those times*. What the Lord says of the Ephesian Church is descriptive also of the whole Christian Church of that period.

Thus, it will be seen, we avail ourselves of all the copious light which the New Testament sheds upon this question and by means of which we are enabled to understand the meaning of this Letter. It is of the first importance that we understand it; for in it God has given us, so to speak, an inspired “base-line,” by means of which we may triangulate the entire Christian dispensation, as outlined in the Seven Epistles; or, let us say, in this Ephesian Letter we have the key by means of which we may enter fully into the meaning of the other six.

The expressions “the first works,” “the first love,” and “whence thou art fallen,” are all practically synonymous. Evidently the first works are not the things

mentioned in verse 2, for in the next verse He adds, "and thou hast steadfastness (Margin, Revised), and *hast not grown weary*"; that is to say the Ephesian Church was still a very *active* and "working" church. The trouble was just here. These works of theirs were not "the first works."

What then were the "first works," or, in other words, what was it from which they had fallen?

The Christian Church may be said to date from the day when Christ, its head, received baptism in the Jordan, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, who then came down upon Him and found in Him a permanent resting place, and one who was ever perfectly responsive and obedient to the will of God. When He went into the Wilderness to undergo temptation, it was because He was "led," or "driven by the Spirit." When He came into Galilee, it is said He "returned in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 5:14). He tells us that He cast out demons "by the Spirit of God" (Matt. 12:28). He "lived by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "My meat," said He, "is to do the will of Him that sent me" (Jno. 4:34). "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (Jno. 8:29). "Believest thou not," said He to Philip, "that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth *His* works" (Jno. 14:10).

These things are not to be regarded as peculiar to Him, as the Son of God, but as spoken of Him *as the Son of Man*,—one who came "that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

These are "the first works,"—this abiding in God,—

this union and communion with the Father,—this delight to do His will. This is “the first love.”

Such was also the very life of the Apostles, as may be seen from the Acts of the Apostles and from their Epistles. The early Church also, as a whole, caught the same spirit in the first days after Pentecost, in the warmth and glow of their first love and faith. Their dwelling-place was “in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.” They lived and moved in spiritual things as those who are at home, and in their native element. The tremendous conflict between the kingdom of Christ to which they belonged, and the kingdom of Satan and the powers of darkness, were too real to them to admit of temporizing or compromises. Formalism could not live in that high altitude. Everything was intensely real. They were too much in love with the things of God to tolerate man-made creeds\* and forms. They lived, so to speak, in the immediate presence of God and talked with Him face to face.

These were sublime heights on which the Christian Church camped and labored in the beginning. Could they maintain it? Will they be content, like Abraham, “the Friend of God,” to live the life of faith and of separation from the world, on the heights of Bethel? or will they make the choice of Lot, who, in his “friendship for the world,” leaves Bethel behind, chooses the Plain below, pitches his tent under the walls of Sodom, and ere long finds himself dwelling inside

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\*We have what is called an “Apostles’ Creed.” It is a misnomer. The very name is a self-contradiction. The two words are mutually antagonistic.

the city and sitting in the gate as one of its Elders. Israel, too, had grown weary after a few days of walking with God in the Wilderness, and had "turned back in their hearts unto Egypt." Will the early Church do in like manner, or will they count it all joy when they fall into testings incident to a life of faith and obedience?

From the history of God's people in Old Testament times, the course of the early Christian Church might have been foreseen, without the definite predictions by Christ and the Apostles that it would prove no exception to the general law of decline and degradation that has characterized this world ever since that first revolt in heaven against the will of God of which the Scriptures speak (2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6).

We are told in this Letter that the Church in Ephesus had already left its first love and had ceased to do the first works before the end of the first century. From many of the epistles of the New Testament, it is apparent that precisely the same was true of the Christian Church, as a whole. The decline had already set in. The start toward Pergamum and Thyatira had been made,—not all at once, but gradually, and not everywhere at the same time and in the same degree, as may be seen in the case of the Seven Churches themselves. Faith had begun to give way to forms and observances. The Word of God was being pushed aside to make place for "the rudiments of the world," for philosophic speculations, and for "the traditions of men." The love of God was being driven out by an ever-increasing friendship for the world. The proof

texts are too voluminous to cite, but read especially Galatians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, James, 2 Peter, 1 John.

Let it be observed that while this change was being made there was no falling off in the number of works. On the contrary, they were, doubtless, more numerous than they had been in the days of their first love. That was the case with the Church in Thyatira; for the Lord says to it, "Thy last works are more than the first."

Let us pause long enough to take this fully in. Everything depends on what kind of works it is to which a Church addresses itself. Departure from God has ever been characterized by a substitution of man-made commandments for the Word of God, and the works of the flesh for the doing of His will. Ceasing to abide in Him is ever followed by a marked increase in outward observances and visible activity. This activity is exceedingly deceptive and misleading. It is one of Satan's masterpieces. The natural heart of man ever prides itself in just these very things.

The books of the Talmud well illustrate the multiplicity and complexity of works that inevitably come in when God's commands are set aside for those of men. These Rabbinical teachings formed a great system that crushed to the earth those who submitted to its galling tyranny. Our Lord spoke of them as "heavy burdens and grievous to be borne" (Matt. 23:4). Peter referred to them as an intolerable yoke (Acts 15:10), whereas the yoke of Christ is easy and His burden is light. The natural heart is offended at the simplicity of the Gospel, and, like Naaman, indignantly turns away from it. It craves the spectacular. It

delights in multiplicity. The noise and ostentation so characteristic of the industrial, commercial and social life of the world, are preferred to the quiet, unobtrusive workings of the Spirit of God. And so love, faith and obedience give place to forms and ceremonies. Submission to the will of God is succeeded by the strenuous and multifarious activities of the flesh, "which things," as Paul well says, "have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. 2:23).

This was the mistake of the Church in Ephesus, and of the early Church, in general. And yet, at that very time, the Apostle John was preaching in all the old-time power of the Spirit to warn the saints against the changes that were taking place, exhorting them to hold steadfastly to that which they had "from the beginning" (1 Jno. 1:1-3, 2:7). "As for you," he says, "let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father" (1 Jno. 2:24).

The force of what we have been saying is in no way broken by the objection that what John was warning the Church against were the Gnostics and their teachings. These were, indeed, among the things referred to by him, but the Gnostics and their teachings could not have come in and taken root in the Church had this not been preceded by a season of decline and degeneration.

At this time the Antinomians also were increasing in numbers in the early Church, but Antinomianism



can never flourish except among those who have rejected the commandment of God in order to keep their traditions.

"That which was from the beginning" is beautifully explained in this matchless book,—The First Epistle of John. As a witness to the exceeding simplicity of God's requirements, it is unique. The idea of *abiding* runs throughout it, like a powerful theme in music. The word "abide" occurs more than twenty times in this brief epistle. The believer abides in the Father, in Christ, in the light, in love. God abides in the believer, the Word also abides in him, and so does the Spirit,—to teach him all things.

Surely the Church of God must have wandered far away from this blessed truth. For the general conception of Christians, and the height of their aspiration, seem to be expressed in such hymns as "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and "Draw me Nearer." The conception is that of *nearness*, whereas the good tidings of the Gospel is "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in Him and he in God" (1 Jno. 4: 15). This is not *nearness*, but *in-ness*, *one-ness*, *union with God*. Here we are at the very source of power; for Christ says (Jno. 15: 5) "apart from me ye can do nothing"—not "*without me*" (as in A. V.) .but "*apart* (χωρὶς, i. e., *severed, detached*) from me ye can do nothing."

He whose conception is that of nearness, but apartness, will ever run to work-righteousness, i. e., salvation and fruit-bearing by his own effort. This accounts for the phenomenal emphasis that is laid upon *works* in the preaching and teaching of to-day. Let us be-



ware of it. It is the harsh voice of the taskmaster, the crack of the whip of the slave-driver: "To the work!" "Get you unto your burdens!" "Increase the tale of the bricks!" "Ye are idle, ye are idle!" (Ex. 5:4, 9, 17).

How different are the words of Christ: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit" (Jno. 15:5).

This is the secret of power in all true Christian activity,—*abiding in Christ, union with Him*. This is the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," of which we read in Heb. 4:9-11: "For he that is entered into His rest hath himself also rested from his (own) works, as God did from His."

This is "the first love." These are "the first works,"—the lofty heights from which the early Church had fallen, or was falling, when "He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" arose to trim the central one and spoke the words of warning, "Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I will come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."

It has been much debated what the judgment is which is here threatened. Some find its fulfillment in the utter ruin and desolation that now, for centuries, have reigned on the site of this once proud metropolis.

Others understand it as prophetic of the extinction of the mother-church of Asia. Possibly this is the meaning, in part. But, it may be said, the same fate overtook others of the Seven Churches, as well. Prof. Ramsay, however, calls attention to an interesting fact that while there is no Church of Ephesus now existing, "Ephesus has always remained the titular head of the Asian Church; and the Bishop of Ephesus still bears that dignity, though he no longer resides at Ephesus, but at Magnesia *ad Sipylum*" (the modern Manisa, about twenty-five miles northeast of Smyrna). And this explanation he believes to be supported by the peculiar wording of the threat, "I will move thy candlestick out of its place."

But while we may believe that the threat to the Ephesian Church finds its fulfillment in one of these ways, there is another and still more important fulfillment to be sought by virtue of the prophetic nature of this Letter, and the representative character of the Church to which it was addressed. The Church in Ephesus did not heed the warning, for its light is gone. Neither did the Church at large "repent and do the first works." This is too painfully apparent to any careful student of Church History. Its candlestick, therefore, has been removed. That is, as we apprehend it, the Apostolic Church lost its primacy, its dominating influence in the Church. Never since that time has any considerable body in the Church of Christ returned to the first love and the works which characterized the first generation of Christians. From that time on to the Protestant Reformation, the Church, as a body, never evinced any desire to return to the

Apostolic faith and practices. It is also a matter of history that the Church of the Reformation never aspired to the simplicity and purity of those early days before the Church had left its first love; while to-day, the consensus of Christian sentiment is well nigh unanimous in regarding those days of apostolic faith, love, obedience and spiritual power as being much too far behind the times to meet the requirements of our "superior intelligence" and "higher civilization"! Surely the candlestick is gone from its place.

There was one thing more to commend in the Church in Ephesus,—their detestation of "the works of the Nicolaitans." It has been a question of much uncertainty who the Nicolaitans were and what they taught. The statement of Irenæus, who wrote near the end of the second century, has been quite generally accepted. "They lead," said he, "lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practise adultery and to eat things sacrificed to idols."\* But in this he manifestly identifies the Nicolaitans with those "who hold the teaching of Balaam." A glance at verses 14, 15, however, shows that they are not thus to be identified. It seems best, therefore, not to accept the opinion of Irenæus.

Another view, worthy of notice, is that the name of this sect should be explained symbolically,—"*Nicolaitans*" meaning "people conquerors" (from *νίκη* *victory*, and *λαός*, *people*). But in what sense are they to be regarded as "people conquerors"? In this,

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\* Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, I, 26:3.

that they denied the Scripture doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, and arrogated to themselves the right and authority to stand between God and His people.

Whether this explanation be the correct one or not, we know from early Church history that in the period of which we are speaking, priestly pretensions were made with increasing frequency and arrogance, and that the Jewish idea of priesthood was being transplanted and was taking root in the Christian Church. But whatever it was, in which the works of the Nicolaitans consisted, the Lord said that *He hated them*.

The Lord well knew that neither the Church in Ephesus, nor the Christian Church, as a whole, would repent and return to the first works. And so He turns and makes an appeal to every man individually. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches." The Spirit is speaking to the Churches; but though the Church may not hearken, Jesus reminds the individual *member* of every church that this message is for him *personally*.

What a judgment is this upon the view that it is the duty of a Christian to acquiesce in the will of the majority! That is the case only in so far as the majority is in accord with the revealed will of God. It is never safe to commit one's self to the decisions of men. *Vox populi* has never been *vox Dei*. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from Jehovah" (Jer. 17:5).

The relation of the soul to God is very personal. God deals with it individually. "He that hath an ear."

This is another form of the "whosoever will" so often met in the Bible. It reminds us of that remarkable moment of which we read in Jno. 7:37, 38, when "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water." Here is a command followed by a promise of blessing to the thirsty believer. So here also is the command to hearken, followed by the promise, "To him that overcometh, to *him* (notice how very personal it is), to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

As already observed, the solemn call of Jesus at the close of this Letter is repeated also at the end of all the other six, and in each case is followed, in a similar way, by a wonderful promise "to him that overcometh."

The reader is again reminded that "what the Spirit saith to the Churches" refers to the contents of *the whole book of Revelation*, and not to these Seven Letters in particular.

How important, then, is it to study well this last book of the Bible, to which our earnest and obedient attention is called by this seven times repeated command: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

Each promise that follows the solemn call is a partial description of the reward for all that overcome,—a glimpse into the future bliss of the redeemed. They are but different facets of a single gem.

In the Letter to Ephesus the picture is that of Paradise restored, of man's restoration to all that Adam

lost by disobedience,—aye, and much more! The Paradise our first parents lost was an *earthly* paradise. But that which every overcoming saint is promised is "*the Paradise of God*," and to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of it.

### THE LETTER TO SMYRNA.

THE Epistle to Smyrna speaks of tribulation, poverty, and opposition, which were common enough in the early days of the Christian Church. The band of believers in Smyrna, however, seem to have won the special commendation of the Lord for the way they had endured them all. They were, in reality, rich and prosperous in a far better sense than if they had possessed great wealth and worldly success. Foremost among their persecutors were the Jews, that are mentioned in ver. 9. So fierce and bitter were they toward the company of believers in Smyrna, that they forfeited the right to be called Israelites. They were rather to be regarded as "Synagogues of Satan," since they were animated and constrained by the Evil One himself. The story of the martyrdom of Polycarp illustrates the feeling of the Jews toward the Christians; for when Polycarp was condemned to death because he had confessed himself a Christian, it is said that the Jews of Smyrna united with the heathen in "crying out with uncontrollable fury and in a loud voice" against Polycarp as "the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians." And when he was condemned to be burned at the stake, the Jews eagerly



assisted the multitude in gathering wood and fagots for the burning.\*

But though the Christians in Smyrna had been faithful, zealous, and steadfast, they are not, therefore, promised exemption from further trials. On the contrary, the Lord tells them that persecution of a yet severer nature is about to break forth upon them. Their imprisonment and persecution, however, would not be of His sending, but the work of the Devil. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days." The ten "days" here mentioned, we believe, have both a literal and a symbolical meaning. As applied to the Church in Smyrna, we may understand them as denoting a time of ten literal days, during which the persecuting power was to manifest itself against the Christians of that city. This Letter was written, doubtless, first of all, to prepare the Christians of Smyrna, then living, for the hour of their trial. But beyond this, the Letter, we believe, also has a wider application, in which the whole Christian Church is seen as typified in the body of believers in Smyrna. In this case, the ten days tribulation may speak prophetically of ten different times of persecution which the Christian Church was to pass through during the period that may be designated as *the Smyrna Period*. It has often been stated that between Nero and Constantine (A. D. 64—A. D. 313), there were ten different seasons of persecution in the Roman world. A list of these persecutions is given by Augustine, in *De Civitate Dei*, XVIII. 52: under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Maximinus, Decius,

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\* *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Chaps. 12 and 13.



Valerian, Aurelian and Diocletian. This is the period, we believe, which is prophetically outlined in the Letter to Smyrna. If then, the Church in Smyrna is a type of the early martyr Church, we may take the word "day" in the broader sense of "*period*," as we ourselves often use it, when we say "in Washington's day," "in my grandfather's day;" "Abraham rejoiced to see my *day*, and he saw it and was glad" (Jno 8:56). In Gen. 2:4, Ex. 13:8, and Deut. 31:17, 18, are other instances in which "day" is sometimes used in Scripture with the meaning of *period*. The various periods in Church history, of which these Seven Churches are severally the types, are not definitely limited to the particular dates to which we assign them,—epochs during which those different conditions were specially *dominant* in the Church. The periods may be said to overlap one another. There are characteristics of each one of the Seven Churches of Asia in the Church to-day. It may also be said that in a single congregation of believers, representatives of all these Seven Churches may sometimes be found to-day. In this view, we see in the Letter to the Church in Smyrna, a message to Christians of every country and every generation. Those who are faithful to Christ, may expect tribulation,—persecution unto death. And to them also are the words of encouragement spoken: "Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." For death by fire, or sword, or wild beast, is but the death of the *body*; but those who suffer thus for the Name "shall not be hurt of the second death."

## THE LETTER TO PERGAMUM.

IN the Church in Pergamum we have a third type of Christian or body of believers. It should be noted, also, that in these Seven Churches are set forth different types of *environment*, or local conditions, in which Christians may be placed in every period of the present dispensation.

Pergamum was a royal city one hundred and fifty years before it came under the power of Rome. From that time, until after the writing of the Apocalypse, it was the official or administrative Capital of the Province of Asia. The Proconsul, or Governor of the Province, possessed the *jus gladii*—the “right of the sword”, or, in other words, *the power of life and death*. Here during the days of persecution under Domitian, in whose reign John had been exiled to Patmos, the Christians of Pergamum had already felt the uncompromising hostility of the Roman government toward the Gospel of Christ and toward those who received it. Pergamum was not only the residence of the Chief Magistrate of the Province, but it was also the royal seat of such a confederacy of heathen gods as to merit the name given by inspiration, the place “where Satan’s throne is.” The chief patron god of Pergamum was a serpent-god—Æsculapius, as Greek art would have it believed; but stripped of its mask of Greek adornment, it is more likely that their worship was, in reality, a form of Devil-worship, under the symbol of a serpent. This would give special significance of meaning to the words “where Satan dwelleth.” Another patron god

of this city was Dionysus, or Bacchus, the wine-god. Among a number of other gods Aphrodite, or Venus, was worshipped with special honor, and had a temple of a most ornate and elaborate character. These gods were worshipped with most shameful and abominable rites, and thus seemed to set the seal of divine approval upon the most corrupt and degrading practices. All of these things point to Pergamum as a city of gross immorality and licentiousness, and remarkable for its wickedness.

It was amid such surroundings as these that the Church of Christ was first planted in Pergamum. From the first it met with great opposition. Already one of their number, Antipas, and perhaps others, had won the crown of martyrdom for the "testimony of Jesus." But now, at length, the power of the surrounding heathenism was making itself felt upon the little body of believers. In this royal city of Satan, with its official influence, its social customs, its culture, refinement, and luxury, the little company of believers, like a small garrison in a fortress, are besieged and stormed with all the skill, subtlety, and patience that have always marked the efforts of Satan in his war against the saints. Finally he is able to introduce some of his own teachers into the Church, who are so artfully disguised as lambs that their wolf-like nature is unsuspected. The real character of these teachers is well brought out in the statement that they "hold the teaching of Balaam." Balaam was a false prophet, who conspired with Balak, a king of an ungodly world-power, to overthrow Israel. The outcome of the conspiracy is recorded in Numbers 25.

Under the influence of these teachers, the character of the Church is changed; the barrier between the Church and the world is broken down; and under the name of liberty, evil and soul-destroying practices are brought in.

Such was the state of the Church in Pergamum which called for the rebuke of the Lord, "Repent therefore, or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth." The Christians in Ephesus had been praised for their intolerance of the Nicolaitans and of all other false teachers. The rebuke to Pergamum is administered because of their toleration. And it is precisely in the relation of the Pergamenian Christians to these false teachers that the real significance of the Epistle lies. It was not only their tolerance of the Balaam-like teachers and the Nicolaitans, but also their suffering them to remain *in the Church* that drew the stern reproof and warning. These false teachers were of their own number; and the Lord Christ calls on the Church in Pergamum to purge itself of them. Failure to do this will cause Him to come quickly and make war against them with the sword of His mouth. But notice, He does not say that He will make war against the *Church*, but against the false teachers. Christ never makes war against His Church; but He will execute His threat, to the letter, upon the false prophets and upon all those who follow them, as He does in Chap. 19: 19-21.

In this Letter to the Church in Pergamum we see outlined the course of Church history during the third, or Pergamum, period, which may be said to extend

from the beginning of the fourth century to the assumption of papal sovereignty by the Bishop of Rome, in the beginning of the seventh century. When Constantine the Great came into possession of the Imperial power of Rome, in the beginning of the fourth century, there followed immediately that unholy alliance between Church and State which has resulted so disastrously to the "little flock," who were to have no fellowship with the world. We read in Gen. 6 of a similar union between the "sons of God" and "the daughters of men." Whether this refers to a union of the godly line of Seth with the wicked descendants of Cain, or whether the words "sons of God" in this passage be understood of angels<sup>1</sup>—fallen and wicked angels, as was held by some of the Apostolic Fathers,<sup>2</sup> and as is held by many to-day—the outcome of that unnatural and evil alliance was a race of Nephilim, or "fallen ones": men who were mighty in deeds of wickedness. Later on, in the time of the Wilderness life of Israel, we see a similar illicit union—Balaam, the false prophet, uniting with Balak, the king of an ungodly world-power, to seduce the people of God and draw them into fellowship with the heathen, and participation in all their abominable deeds. In like manner, from the time of Constantine, bishops and emperors by their unholy and forbidden alliance paganized Christianity and brought forth a new generation which was mighty in its power to work unrighteousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Job 1: 6, 2. 1, 38: 7.

<sup>2</sup> See Justin Martyr's *2d Apology*, Chap. 5, and Athenagoras' *A Plea for the Christians*, Chap. 24.

The same sad story is prophesied in the Parable of the Mustard Seed. The mustard plant, small and humble as an *herb*, suddenly, and by some evil power, develops beyond its true type into a *tree*, so that the "birds of the air" which, at first, had tried to uproot and destroy the good seed now come and lodge in the branches. From our Lord's interpretation of the Parable of the Sower, we know that these "birds" represent Satan and "the powers of the air" (Eph. 2: 2).

In the Pergamum period we have the fulfillment of this parable prophecy. The Church, unwilling longer to remain a pure virgin and loyal to her absent Lord, seeks an adulterous union with the world, and the result is a great and mighty World-Church. From this time on, kings and emperors of the world, who before had done their best to uproot and destroy it, now flock to it, find shelter within it, and exercise dominion in its name.

### THE LETTER TO THYATIRA.

OF all the seven cities of Asia, Thyatira was the weakest and least famous. Situated in the midst of a fertile valley, it was ill-adapted by nature to be a place of military strength, or the home of a vigorous and hardy people. Standing also near the boundary line separating Mysia and Lydia, it belonged in the early days, now to one, and now to the other, according as the kingdom of Pergamum or the kingdom of Syria held the ascendancy.

After the various kingdoms of Asia Minor had been brought under the imperial power of Rome, Thyatira



was left free to engage undisturbed in the quiet pursuits of industry and trade. In no other city of Asia Minor has the existence of so many trade-guilds been revealed by the spade of the archæologist. No less than ten of these guilds are mentioned in the inscriptions found. The importance of this fact, as bearing on the social and religious life of the city and of the Church in Thyatira, should be duly considered; for quite probably, it is in this very thing that we are to find the real danger which threatened the body of believers in Thyatira.

These guilds were corporate bodies, possessing great power and influence in the municipal, industrial, commercial, social, and religious life of cities in the first century. So great were the commercial and social advantages of membership in these guilds, that to belong to them was deemed essential to the success of an artisan or merchant.

Such membership, however, was fraught with the greatest peril to the disciples of Christ; for these guilds were, in reality, brotherhoods, in which all met on a pagan and idolatrous platform. "In the first place, the bond which held a guild together lay always in the common religion in which all united, and in the common sacrificial meal of which all partook; the members ate and drank fellowship and brotherhood in virtue of the pagan deity whom they served. In the existing state of society it was impossible to dissociate membership of a guild from idolatry, and the idolatry was a kind that by its symbolism and its efficacy exerted great influence on its adherents, making them members of a unity which was essentially non-Chris-



tian and anti-Christian. In the second place, the common banquets were celebrated amid circumstances of revelry and enjoyment that were far from conducive to strict morality, as is evident from representations of the feasts in such clubs.”<sup>1</sup> “To hold aloof from the clubs was to set one’s self down as a mean-spirited, grudging, ill-conditioned person, hostile to existing society, devoid of generous impulse and kindly neighborly feeling, an enemy of mankind.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus it will be seen that in this matter, the early Christians were exposed to one of the subtlest devices of the tempter, viz., to compromise themselves with the ungodly world for the sake of commercial, social, or political advantage. And it is not improbable that in some such way as this “the woman Jezebel” was able powerfully to shape the opinion and conduct of some in the Church in Thyatira. In all such questions, we might be sure to find her posing as the champion of “liberty,” “toleration,” and “broad-mindedness.” It is probable that this self-styled prophetess was a real woman, a teacher in Thyatira and vicinity, whose teaching and influence had already proved effective not only in Thyatira, but also in Pergamum, which was about forty miles distant. Her children, of which verse 23 makes mention, were those who followed her pernicious teachings. Antinomian doctrines and practices were already current in the early Christian Church, and gross immorality, as well as spiritual adultery (worldliness), was, no doubt, one of the offences of which verse 20 speaks.

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. W. M. Ramsay, in article *Thyatira*, in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*.

<sup>2</sup> W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 348.

The judgment to be meted out for such infidelity, in one who had been "espoused as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2), is stated in clear terms in verses 22, 23. No severer rebuke can be found in all the Seven Letters; and its severity is made all the more emphatic by reason of the fact that in this Letter the speaker discloses His identity with greater plainness than in any other: "These things saith *the Son of God*" (ver. 18).

There was, however, not a little to commend in Thyatira. "I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first." But there was this one evil thing in the Church which drew from the Lord such words of stern admonition and awful threatening,—in that they were suffering the woman Jezebel to continue among them and poison the Church by her corrupt teaching and influence. It is not likely that Jezebel was the name of this wicked woman. The name is given, doubtless, for the purpose of making known to them her real character.

Verses 24-28 are specially addressed to a select company of believers in Thyatira who rejected her teachings and kept themselves pure from the practices of her followers, and who, with true discernment, characterized both teaching and practices as "the deep things of Satan." They must have been in the minority, otherwise there would have been no toleration of this false prophetess by the Church. In their fidelity to Christ they had been content to be placed at a great disadvantage commercially and socially, as compared with the others. Because they had declined the fel-

lowship of the guilds, brotherhoods, and clubs, they were looked upon as "mean-spirited" and "ill-conditioned"; they were of no account in the social life, and insignificant factors in the business world of their day. Not so, however, did Christ regard them. He looked upon them with genuine approval. They are not bidden to repent, but to be steadfast: "I cast upon you none other burden than this\*: that which ye have hold fast till I come."

Notice the contrast here implied—powerful, is it not?—between the position of weakness and obscurity to which the world had relegated this little remnant of faithful ones, and that of kingly authority, world-wide pre-eminence, and all-conquering might to which Christ, when He comes, will exalt each one. "He that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father; and I will give him the morning star."

What is the meaning of this last sentence: "And I will give him the morning star"? The morning star shines with great brilliance in the heavens, in the early morning, before sunrise, before the night is fully past. The meaning of this promise, therefore, as we apprehend it, is that they who overcome will be caught up, glorified, and made to reign with Christ upon the

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\* There should be no period at the end of verse 24, after "burden," as in the Revised and Authorized Versions; for *πλήν* is not to be taken as a conjunction ("Nevertheless," "howbeit," and "but"), as these versions render it, but has the force of a *comparative adverb* after *ἄλλο* (*other*), and should be translated "than." See Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*, πλ B. I.

earth, before the long night of this present age shall be wholly gone, and before the Great Sun of Righteousness shall have filled the whole earth with the glory of His rising. It is a promise in figurative and poetic form of what is announced in plainest words in 5:10 as being already fulfilled in the time of which Chapters 4 and 5 speak: "And they reign (or, "*are reigning*") upon the earth" (Revised Version) The *present tense* is the true reading here, rather than the *future tense*, as in the Authorized Version.

In the prophetic view, Thyatira represents a period. It follows the Pergamum period. There seems to be plain internal evidence of this: in verse 21, Christ, in speaking of the woman Jezebel, says, "I gave her time that she should repent and she willeth not to repent of her fornication." This implies that He had sent her a message before this, calling for her repentance. We believe that such a call to repentance is found in verse 16. The same evil teaching had been given in Pergamum (ver. 14), and, doubtless, by this false prophetess. This Jezebel, we repeat, must have been a real woman. She was one of those false prophets John says "had already gone out into the world" (1 Jno. 4:1). But in the wider and prophetic view of these Seven Letters, she is also the forerunner, or type, of an abominable teaching of error which continues in the Christian Church throughout the age,—the teaching which is referred to in verses 14, 20, and which must not be confounded with Nicolaitanism (ver. 15). But notwithstanding the call to repentance and the patient waiting, "she was unwilling to repent." Church history corroborates that statement perfectly.

Notwithstanding the creditable way with which the Church stamped out the Arian heresy, during all the centuries covered by these two periods, there never was any serious effort or disposition to cleanse herself from the pagan forms and practices, and to break her unholy alliance with the world, of which we have just been speaking (in the Letter to Pergamum).

Roughly stated, the Thyatira Epoch may be said to extend from the assumption of papal sovereignty, about the beginning of the seventh century, to the beginning of the Reformation. The Church in Thyatira symbolizes all Christendom during this period. Jezebel was a heathen queen in Israel. Coming from Tyre, she brought her idolatry and pagan priesthood with her. She destroyed the true prophets of God, in order to put her own false prophets in their place. In like manner also, the early Church, by its alliance with the pagan and unbelieving world, brought in the idolatry and the pagan rites and ceremonies that are such a conspicuous feature of Papal Rome to-day. The true prophets of God—the Sacred Scriptures, and the faithful ministers of the Gospel—have been hunted, killed and driven out to make room for those who, by their teaching, seduce the Lord's servants to commit fornication with the world. Masquerading under the name of Christian, this false prophetess is teaching the Church the ways of the world, and trying to make her unfaithful to her Lord and Bridegroom.

We hope that by our mention of Papal Rome we shall not be understood as holding that either in this Letter to Thyatira, or in any other part of the Apocalypse, Papal, or even Pagan Rome is symbolized, in

particular. What we have said of Papal Rome was true also of the other bodies of Christendom in that period. Rome being the first-born, received the portion of the first-born, "the double portion." She attained and still retains, to the present day, pre-eminence among all the daughters of "the woman Jezebel."

The ancient and greatly venerated, not to say *popular* view among Protestants to-day, that Rome is specially symbolized in the Apocalypse, will not stand a calm and careful study of the chapters to follow. It is time that a more Scriptural view should prevail. "The woman Jezebel," we believe, represents a Prophetess of the False, or Mock-Church, inside the Church of Christ, industriously seeking to propagate error in the whole body of believers. She is one of the profligate daughters of the harlot-mother, "Babylon the Great" (17:5). Christians, by whatever name they are called, are here to be viewed as constituting one body, just as Israel, notwithstanding the fearful depths of apostacy to which it sometimes fell, was ever viewed as *Israel*—the Lord's people—Jeroboam, Ahab, and Caiaphas being accounted *Israelites*, apostate though they were. So in these Seven Letters, all Christendom is viewed as one Church, and includes both Evangelical and non-Evangelical Christians. The whole is greater than any part, however large that part may be. Rome is only a part.

This Letter to Thyatira should be studied in connection with the Parable of the Leaven in Matt. 13. The woman of the Parable is this same woman, Jezebel.



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE LETTER TO SARDIS.

SARDIS was one of the great cities of ancient times. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia a long time before Lydia became an empire, embracing nearly the whole of Asia Minor west of the Halys (Kizil Irmak). Its military position and strength, its many industrial arts, its situation in the midst of the rich valley of the Hermus, and on the main road from the interior to the Ægean Sea, marked it out, in those early centuries, as the chief city of Western Asia, or as it styled itself in the inscriptions on its coins, "Sardis, the First Metropolis of Asia, of Lydia, and of the Greeks." Its last king, or emperor, Crœsus, was reputed to be the wealthiest prince of antiquity. Under the Persian rule (B. C. 546-334), Sardis retained its pre-eminence in Western Asia, and was, in a sense, the Western capital of the Persian Empire.

From the time of the invasion of Asia by Alexander the Great (B. C. 334), the importance of Sardis began to wane, and after it passed under the supremacy of Rome, its decline was still more rapid. In the year A. D. 17, it was destroyed by an earthquake, which also laid in ruins, the same night, eleven other cities of Asia Minor, on which account the Emperor Tiberius remitted all its taxes for five years, and made it a gift

of ten million sesterces (more than four hundred thousand dollars) to aid it in rebuilding.\*

But the importance and pre-eminence of Sardis could not be restored by such means, for its glory had long since departed. The words of reproof spoken to the Church in Sardis were equally true of the city itself: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead." Indeed, the history of the Church seems to have been cast in a mould similar to that of the city itself.

Sardis, the city, as its name in the plural (*Sardeis*) implies, consisted of two parts: the large town on the plain, and the acropolis above it, a small city on the summit of a spur of Mount Tmolus. This acropolis, or citadel, was fitted by nature to become, with a little aid from the hand of man, an impregnable fortress. It stands about 1500 feet above the plain. On all sides, except the south, where it is joined to the mountain by a narrow neck of land, the sides of this fortress lift themselves in almost perpendicular walls of rock, which were considered unscalable. So perfect was it, as a citadel, that a few persons on the summit might easily defy a large army in the times of ancient warfare.

But here is an interesting point in its history. In the time of King Cræsus, when the city was attacked and the acropolis was laid siege to by Cyrus the Great (B. C. 546), the Lydian King, trusting to the inaccessibility of the fortress, neglected to station a guard on the north side, where, in the course of time, by the

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\* Tacitus, *Annals*, II. 47.



disintegration of the rocky face of the cliff, a crevice, or cleft, had been made, by means of which the Persians, one after another, succeeded in scaling the precipice, gained the summit, and captured the city (Herodotus 1:84).

In the last half of verse 3 we find a most pertinent reference to this event, which had so powerfully shaped the destiny of the capital of Lydia: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Every one in Sardis would understand the allusion.

But we are unable to understand these words as having reference alone, or chiefly, to the local Church in Sardis. Churches are seldom visited by a sudden judgment such as the one which is threatened here. We must therefore see in them a reference to the Parousia, and all that is implied in that term. Hence this passage, we believe, is another of those internal evidences, to be found in these Letters, of their prophetic import with reference to the whole Christian Church of this dispensation.

Verse 4 contains another touch of local coloring which would give it special force to the Christians in Sardis: "But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy." We do not know the local conditions in Sardis well enough to understand all that is here alluded to. It must, however, have reference to certain evil conditions, practices, or events in the social life of the city that had tainted the life of many in the Church. It is said that the Sardians bore an ill repute among the people of ancient

times, on account of their voluptuous habits of life. In the early days, they had been a hardy and warlike people; but Herodotus, the historian, tells us (I., 155, 156) that after Cyrus had captured the city, Cræsus counselled him to require the people to give up their military pursuits and relax the discipline that had given them a rugged and manly vigor, and to enjoin them to lead a life, and to cultivate those things, which would effeminate. Cyrus expressed himself as "pleased with the expedient \* \* \* \* \* and said that he would follow his advice." From the effeminate to the voluptuary the distance is only a step, and but little time would be required to make the transition. And while we are now speaking of the Sardians, in general, it seems to be clear from the Epistle that not a few of these voluptuaries were found within the Church. It was of such, no doubt, that the Apostle Peter speaks in his second Epistle (2: 13-22), where significant reference is made to this Balaam-teaching, of which we have already spoken in the two preceding Letters.

But there were some in Sardis who, "having escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," were careful not to become "again entangled therein and overcome." These the Lord calls "worthy," and He adds the promise, "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels." Sardis had once had a name—"The First Metropolis of Asia, of Lydia, and of the Greeks"; but she had

lost it, and now, although reputed to be alive, she was in reality dead. But he who, in the midst of so many adverse influences and examples, shall watch and overcome, will receive a deathless name, and will be honored by having it confessed in the presence of His Father and before His angels, where honor and glory are no longer subject to the vicissitudes of time.

The Church in Sardis was prophetic of the Church of the Reformation period,—a period extending from the beginning of the Reformation into the first half of the eighteenth century. The Letter to Sardis, we believe, is a prophetic burden, not so much to all Christendom, in general, as to the Church of the Reformation, in particular. This view is not only supported by the contents of the Letter itself, but is also confirmed by what we have already noted in the topography of the city of Sardis. It was also pointed out that verse 3 is Christ's warning to the Christians of Sardis to watch, lest He come upon them suddenly, as a thief, thereby reminding them that it was through their failure to watch that the people of Sardis had once lost the citadel, and with it the empire.

The unwallled city on the plain may well stand for the great body of unevangelical Christendom, out from which the Reformers came. The true children of the Reformation are those living in the town above. Leaving the mists, the miasms, and the insecurity of the world below, they choose for their dwelling-place the heights of God's abounding grace. Renouncing their own wisdom, abhorring their own righteousness, and realizing their unclean and lost condition, they betake themselves to the stronghold above, and abide in Him

“who was made unto them wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.” Their home is an impregnable citadel. It was not by accident that Luther’s hymn, “A mighty Fortress is our God,” was the great hymn of the Reformation. It was in accordance with God’s plan, as outlined so long before, in His message to Sardis—nay, rather, let us say, it was in His mind when He laid the foundation of this “natural” stronghold, as men commonly regard it, but which it would be better to call a *supernatural* fortress. If this view be correct, that the Sardian Letter is a special message to the Church of the Protestant Reformation, then, of necessity, it comes to us fraught with a ten-fold more solemn import.

From our childhood we have been accustomed to boast ourselves in the Reformation; and, at first, we are inclined to resent the suggestion that in the words “Thou hast a name that thou livest and thou art dead,” Christ was addressing the Church of the Reformation. It is humiliating to Protestants to entertain the thought that we also, in our own turn, required the sending of a prophet with a message of reproof for our departure from God.

But it must be so. The whole body of Christendom had, practically, been dead many centuries before Luther nailed his Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg. There was no longer anything to hope for in another appeal to it. The message to Thyatira had gone unheeded. And, besides, that Letter sounds like a word of *final* warning. But now, with this new and great body that had come out from the Roman Church, the case was different. There was hope that

this prophetic utterance would be heeded by those whose very name is a profession of quick and implicit obedience to "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Distinguished as were many of the leaders of the Reformation, in spiritual stature and prowess, it would be a great mistake to judge the whole Reformation Church by these. More than that, it would be quite as serious a mistake to suppose that the Church of the Reformation maintained, during the second century of its life, all that it stood for in the freshness of its beginning, when a greater hunger for the Word and persecutions had done their appointed work of cleansing. It had started well, as is implied in the words, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear." But, like the early Christian Church, and in perfect keeping with the history of God's people in every dispensation of the world, from Eden down to the present, love and obedience had been followed by a gradual decline, which quickly deepened into ever-increasing separation from God. The fields sown with the good seed gave, in the early days of the Reformation, the finest promise of unusual increase, but the later growth and the harvest were disappointing. Hence the complaint, "I have found no works of thine perfected before my God." This simple statement is fully borne out by history. It is sad, but undeniable, that the Protestant Reformation was, so to speak, nipped by a severe frost when the crop was only half grown. Great and glorious as was the work done by the Reformers in the early days of the mighty awakening, they could not accomplish everything. The dis-

tance from Rome to the perfect knowledge of, and obedience to, the will of God was too great to be covered in a single generation.

As Moses, after leading Israel out of Egypt, died on the wilderness side of the Jordan, before he had brought them into the promised land, so the great Reformers died, without having brought into "the rest that remaineth for the people of God" those whom they had led out of Rome. Moses was succeeded by Joshua, but the people of the Protestant Reformation have been less fortunate. For them no Joshua has ever arisen. A careful reading of the first chapter of Joshua will give the reason. The successors of the great Reformers found their inspiration, not in a face to face communion with God and in meditation upon His law day and night, but called themselves by the names of their great leaders, and were more zealous as defenders of their teachings—"the doctrines of men"—than they were as students of the Word of God.

As might have been expected, therefore, the Church of the Reformation lapsed more and more into formalism, stagnation and unbelief. And what are these but death? An improvement on Rome? Yes, decidedly; but dead, nevertheless. "Thou hast a name that thou livest and thou art dead."

In saying this we do not forget the rise of individuals—giants, some of them, multitudes, in the aggregate, (aye, and some of them, within the Church of Rome, who, like Madam Guyon, were more evangelical than their Protestant contemporaries)—who, in the spirit of the Apostles, or rather in their love and devotion to Christ and His Word, both drank and filled



their buckets at the very fountain-head itself, and not from the stream far below, after it had become contaminated and befouled by the pollutions of the world.

It is of these the Lord is speaking in verse 4: "But thou has a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

What words could better express the pleasure God takes in those who, in utter repudiation of all claims to their own righteousness, seek "the righteousness of God" by faith, and receive cleansing by the blood of Christ, and by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit with the Word. Such as these do not defile their garments, and hence are accounted worthy to walk with Him in white. To such, therefore, are spoken the words of promise, "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels."

### **THE LETTER TO PHILADELPHIA.**

ABOUT twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis was Philadelphia, the second city of importance in Lydia. It lay on the direct road from Smyrna to the cities of Phrygia on the great table-lands of Asia Minor, some 2500 feet higher than Philadelphia itself, or 3000 feet above the level of the sea. The importance of Philadelphia lay in its relation to these upland cities of the interior; and it is in her peculiar relationship to these cities of this central plateau, doubtless, that we are to find the true significance of the "key" and the "open door" of verses 7 and 8. For as the city held the key

to the trade of an extensive region in Eastern Lydia and Western Phrygia, so the Church of Philadelphia is here reminded that her position with reference to the evangelization of this large district is strategic, and of Christ's own appointment. Hence the Church in Philadelphia has long been rightly called "the missionary Church."

Philadelphia was situated in the midst of a region subject to frequent volcanic disturbances in the first century. The soil of the country about it is black from the disintegration of the lava beds. It was partially destroyed by the earthquake of A. D. 17, which laid Sardis in ruins. Strabo, the historian-geographer, who died A. D. 24, writing two or three years after the earthquake, speaks of Philadelphia as "a city subject to constant earthquakes. The walls of the houses," he continues, "are incessantly opening, and sometimes one, sometimes another, part of the city is experiencing some damage. The majority of the people (for few persons live in the city) pass their lives in the country, employing themselves in agriculture and cultivating a good soil. Yet it is surprising that there should be even a few persons so much attached to a place where their dwellings are insecure; but," he concludes, "one may marvel more at those who founded the city." \*

We have no means of knowing how long this state of terror continued after Strabo wrote; but the memory of it would survive a long time. Indeed, it would seem probable, from this Epistle, that the people were

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\* Strabo, *Geography*, XIII. 4. 10.



still living in the fear of some new catastrophe. This, no doubt, will go far to account for the fact that no word of reproof is spoken to the saints in Philadelphia. The habit of going out into the open country to live in tents, booths, or huts, and of living ever as if in view of some impending disaster, would be sure to work most effectually to bring this company of believers up to a high degree of spirituality and service; for in all these experiences, they had been instructed concerning the instability and vanity of earthly things, and had learned the deep meaning of those words of Hag. 2:6: "Yet once, it is a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations." They had also pondered well the inspired comments on this prophecy, in Heb. 12:27-28: "And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with reverence and awe." And thus, in a time when the ordinary life of trade and money-getting had been so disturbed, we may be sure they had turned their eyes toward the door that God had opened to them, and directed their attention to the evangelization of the regions beyond.

In all this they were walking, by faith, in the steps of Abraham, "the Friend of God," who also "went out," like themselves; "for he was looking (imperfect tense) for the city which hath *the* foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8-10). Christ's

words of approval, satisfaction, and promise, in verse 9, were therefore quite in the natural order of things.

In verse 12 there are two or three local references to the great catastrophe from which the Philadelphians had suffered: "He that overcometh I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more." These words are very pertinent, in view of the insecure and tottering condition of the walls and buildings during the time of incessant earthquake shock, which rendered life in the city so perilous that the people were compelled to "go out thence" into the open country for safety. In beautiful contrast to this instability and fear, and to all the discomforts attending the flight and the life in the open country, is the promise to every one that overcomes, that he shall be made a pillar of great honor and importance in the sanctuary of God that can never be shaken, and where there can be no fear of further change or evil.

Another reference is to the "New Name": "and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name." After this great earthquake, the Emperor Tiberius gave to Philadelphia (as also to the other ruined cities of Asia Minor), a liberal grant of money, to enable it to rebuild.\* The city, in gratitude to the Emperor, took a new name and called itself Neo-Cæsarea, in honor of Tiberius, the new Cæsar, who had succeeded to the throne (Aug. 19, A. D. 14) but three years before the earthquake. The Christians

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\*Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 47.

of that city would, therefore, appreciate keenly the peculiar force of the promise just quoted. Philadelphia had had reason enough to be ashamed of its new name; for the new Cæsar, who in the beginning of his reign had ruled with comparative moderation, afterward became a perfect monster of wickedness and infamy; but the overcoming saint of Philadelphia, or of any other place, or century, will never have reason to blush for the New Name that Christ will write upon him.

In the prophetic view, this Letter to Philadelphia represents the age of modern missions, beginning in the first half of the eighteenth century. The distinguishing characteristic of this Epoch is its world-wide missionary activities. God has set before His Church "a door opened." The "open door" is the door of access to all nations for the purpose of evangelizing them. The special approval of the Lord of the vineyard is given, because His Church had "kept" His Word, and had entered that door of opportunity. This word "hast kept" is the same word which elsewhere is often translated "*observe*." "To keep" is *to obey*. The Church in this period is like the merchantman\* seeking goodly pearls, and is willing to part with everything, to become possessor of those pearls of great price—redeemed souls in every zone and in every degree of longitude. The peculiar delight which the Lord takes in foreign missionary enterprise is clearly

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\* The merchantman of the Parable, is Christ, who gave all that He had (His life) for the Church,—the Pearl of great price (Acts 20: 28). But while this is true of Christ, the Head, it is none the less true also of His *Body*,—the Church, and of *members* of the Body also—individual believers; for "*every one when he is perfected shall be as his Master*" (Luke 6: 40).

brought out in this Letter; for though there are still in the Church of this epoch such great errors in teaching and practice, the goodly procession of the heralds of salvation moving in a steady stream out through the "opened door" is so pleasing to Him that He does not seem to notice her shortcomings. And when He speaks it is only to bestow words of praise: "Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name"; and we seem to hear Him saying, "Thou art all fair, my love: and there is no spot in thee" (Song of Songs 4:7).

Attention has already been called to the fact that although these seven prophetic periods are more or less clearly marked, there is, however, an overlapping of one period into the other; also that the characteristics of each period are to be found in every other. Thus, we may say, there were Philadelphian Christians in the Ephesian and Smyrna epochs. And again, the "Woman Jezebel" of Thyatira, is, even in the Philadelphia times, actively inserting the leaven and seducing the Lord's servants to submit themselves to the adulterous embraces of the world.

We now come to consider that remarkable and unconditioned promise in verse 10: "Because thou didst keep the word of my patience I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth." What is the meaning of this great passage? In answering this question, let us first ask what is "the hour of trial" that is here spoken of? The promise in which these words are found undoubtedly gave the Church in Philadelphia assurance of protection

from further disaster, such as the one which had so recently laid their city in ruins. But this cannot be all that was meant; for the hour of trial, whatever it might be, was "to come upon the whole world." \* Neither can it refer, in particular, to some great world-extensive catastrophe which was to occur in the time of the Philadelphian Christians then living; for history is altogether silent with regard to any such universal calamity, or hour of trial, as is here referred to. Nor has anything occurred since that time, extensive enough, to answer the description here given. We must therefore conclude that it is speaking of an hour that has not yet struck.

Here then, we have another strong proof that the prophecies of Chapters 2 and 3 apply not alone to these seven local Churches of Asia Minor, but that they have also *a dispensational import*, and are speaking to Christians of the whole present dispensation. This hour of trial, as we apprehend it, is the time of Tribulation referred to in Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, of which the sufferings and agonies connected with the siege of Jerusalem were typical and prophetic. That "hour of trial," though a time of brief duration, will nevertheless be so important, and the trial will be of such severity, that the description of it occupies the greater part of this book (Chaps. 6-19). The *keeping from* (or *out of*, Greek *ἐκ* ) this hour of trial which Christ promises, is that which is also promised in Luke 21 : 34-36, and is made to all His people, and not especially to the Jews, as some affirm.

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\* For a discussion of the word *οἰκουμένη*, which is here translated *world*, see Chap. 13.

Both of these passages, on their very face, are definite pledges that the watching and praying saints of the Lord will be withdrawn from the place of trial before the trial comes.

The same promise is made with great clearness in Mal. 3:17: "And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I do this (margin); and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Amer. Rev. Version). The "day" here spoken of is "the day of His coming" mentioned in verses 2-5 of the same Chapter. It cannot refer to Christ's First Coming. That was to be *in humiliation*. That was a time when it was said of Him, "A bruised reed shall He not break and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Is. 42:3). But this passage speaks of His coming *in judgment*, when "He shall send forth judgment unto victory." It is of *this* time He is speaking when He says "I will spare them."

And then, continuing the subject, the Holy Spirit in the last Chapter of the Old Testament has drawn in fewest words a bold outline of "the time of the end"—the same subject as that which holds so large a place in the last book of the New Testament. In verses 1-3 is shown the tremendous contrast to be seen in that day between God's treatment of the wicked, and His gracious dealings with His own faithful ones: "For behold the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Jehovah of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall



the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings; *and ye shall go forth and gambol as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked* (throughout the present period, and more especially in the days of the Tribulation, it is given to the wicked to tread down the righteous); *for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do this* (margin), *saith Jehovah of hosts*" (1-3). This is not a picture of the saints going through the Tribulation, nor even of their going *into* it, but of their blessed and complete deliverance from it.

No promise of the Word of God is more plain and unmistakable than this thrice repeated one in Mal. 3 and 4, Luke 21: 34-36, and Rev. 3: 10. The living saints will be caught up before the Tribulation, while, as a matter of course, those who are not living, but who "have kept the word of His patience", will also have escaped that dreadful time, and will be raised from the dead and caught up together with the living saints (Thes. 4: 15-17).

### THE LETTER TO LAODICEA.

LAODICEA was the capital of Greater Phrygia, and one of the richest and most prosperous cities of Asia Minor. It was an important center for banking and large financial transactions, and a town of many prosperous industries. Chief among these were the production and manufacture of the soft, glossy, black wool for which Laodicea was famous, and also for the trade in the rich and expensive garments made from it. "The country around Laodicea," says Strabo, "breeds



excellent sheep, remarkable not only for the softness of their wool \* \* \* \* \* but also for their dark, raven-gloss color. The Laodiceans derive a large revenue from them.”<sup>1</sup> The great wealth of Laodicea is further shown by the fact that in A. D. 60, when it was prostrated by an earthquake, “it recovered its pristine glory from its own resources, and without any relief from us”<sup>2</sup> (*i. e.*, the Imperial treasury). This fact also gives point to the words of Christ, “Thou sayest, I am rich and am become wealthy, and have need of nothing.”

There was at Laodicea a celebrated school of medicine, and some of the physicians of this city were famous oculists. It was probably here also that the celebrated “Phrygian powder,” the Collyrium, or eye-salve, was made, which was so extensively used for eye-diseases throughout the Roman Empire. All this would give special force to our Lord’s intimation that the eyes of His followers in Laodicea required treatment far beyond the skill of their local physicians and remedies.

The numerous hot springs in which the neighborhood abounded were much resorted to for their baths in those days. These hot, or lukewarm, springs of water are even to-day “a prominent feature of the local topography of Laodicea.”

All of these various circumstances and local conditions seem to have been alluded to in the message which Christ, through His angel, dictated to John, for the special and personal consideration of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Geography*, XII. 8. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, XIV. 27.

Church in Laodicea. He is as fully acquainted with the real life of the Church as He is with the real life and history of the city. Indeed the life of the Church seems to have reflected that of the town, as we have seen was also the case with others of the Seven Churches. The waters of the thermal springs near by were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm—grateful for bathing, pleasing to the flesh, but utterly unfit to drink,—nauseous, intolerable. Such also was the condition of the Christians in Laodicea. They were too busy with their trade, their banking, their dress, and their worldly life, to be a living witness for Christ in the midst of the great spiritual darkness of the city. It seems not to have occurred to them that their spiritual condition was most alarming. They were filled with a serene sense of self-satisfaction, the complacency that is so often born of worldly success and prosperity; they were satisfied with the past; comfortable and contented in what they had in the present, and highly optimistic with regard to the future.

The Church in Laodicea is the only one of the seven which received no word of praise. It was lukewarm. The Lord prefers coldness to lukewarmness. It is because lukewarmness implies a previous knowledge of the will of God, and having once possessed the heavenly gift. To have possessed and abandoned, is worse than never to have been in possession, because of the contempt implied. Like Esau, they had despised their birthright and had bartered it away for worldly and temporal good. The sin of Laodicea is further enlarged upon in verse 17. It claimed to be rich and well supplied with everything; and so it was. But

Laodicea was so spiritually blind that it did not know that its knowledge, its righteousness, its possessions, and the things which ministered to its satisfaction and pleasure, were all of the wrong kind. They were "of the world." Such riches are described in the opening verses of James 5: "Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and your silver are rusted, and their rust shall be for a testimony against you and shall eat your flesh as fire." Therefore Laodicea was, in reality, "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"; for only the knowledge and the vision that come from God, and the riches and covering that He supplies, are worth having.

The judgment that is in store for such an apostate Church is one of the worst that could be mentioned: "I will spue thee out of my mouth," as something altogether disagreeable and abhorrent. And yet "the God of all grace" will give Laodicea one more chance. He urges her to repentance and to be zealous therein, thereby implying that its opportunity for repentance will be short. He makes a last and most pathetic appeal, which reminds one of that scene on Olivet, when Christ was weeping over Jerusalem. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me." These are strange words. Christ, the Lord, standing like a hungry stranger, on the outside of His own Church, which should never have suffered Him to go out! How did it happen that He had not remained within it? Was he led out *by force*, as at Nazareth, and

Jerusalem? Had they *asked* him to depart, as the Gadarenes had done? Or had He been *frozen out* by their neglect, indifference and contempt? Let inquisitors, destructive critics, and Christian worldlings answer.

In the Laodicean Church we have the type and prophecy of the seventh and last period of this present dispensation. The name itself is significant. The word is compounded of two Greek words, λαός, *people*, and δίκη, *judgment, custom*. The name would therefore imply that this Church of Laodicea was governed by the decisions, judgments and customs of the *people*, instead of submitting themselves to be governed by the "law of the *Lord*," which "is perfect," and "the judgments of the *Lord*," which, "are true and righteous altogether." Instead of referring everything to God for an expression of *His* will, they followed the opinions of *men*. Their highest authority was *popular sentiment*. This Church was eminently *democratic*; the Apostolic Church was conspicuously *theocratic*. It has been well observed that the Acts of the Apostles would be more correctly called "The Acts of the Holy Ghost." The account of the first Church council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) shows that the Apostles, in giving their decision, were merely concurring in what the Holy Spirit had already signified to be *His* will. Similar illustrations might be multiplied. Laodicea, on the contrary, turned for guidance to *human* customs, traditions, and decisions. The Holy Spirit was made to understand that *His* counsel and direction were not desired.

Let us bear in mind that the things of which the

Lord made complaint in the former Letters, not having been repented of, continue right along in the Church, although mention of them is not made in each letter.

The loss of the first love and the neglect of the first works, which we saw in Ephesus; the toleration of the false teachers of Pergamum; the club and fraternity life of Thyatira, with its mingling of the Church and the world in unholy and adulterous fellowship; the deadness and defilement for which Sardis was rebuked, all remain in the Church, working as leaven, corrupting more and more the great body which calls itself Christian, until the whole mass has been leavened, as we find it in the Laodicean times.

With the exception of occasional gleams of steadfastness and obedience, such as we have seen in Smyrna, in Philadelphia, and in the "few names in Sardis," there has been a steady movement downward,—from high to low,—from Bethel to Sodom,—from the pure theocracy of the early Apostolic days, to the democracy of Laodicea.

It is the firm conviction of many careful students of God's Word, that the Church of God has already entered upon the Laodicean stage. The Church of Rome and the other Non-Evangelical bodies of Christendom, for many centuries, have been governed rather by the writings of the Church Fathers, the decrees of popes and patriarchs, the decisions of Councils, the teachings and commandments of bishops and priests,—the traditions of *men*. But with the Reformed Churches the case was different. Brushing aside the traditions of men, they took their stand upon THE

REVEALED WILL OF GOD, AS DECLARED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES. This was their highest and only tribunal, where all cases affecting the Church or individual were to be decided. But all this is now changed. The Word of God has ceased to be the supreme and only authority, except in the case of a little remnant. Business, the professions, society, and all the activities of life, have, each one, its own code of laws, which are in startling contrast to both the letter and the spirit of the Gospel. Each one has its own Declaration of Independence from God's Word and authority. And the professed followers of Christ, being no longer dead to the world, have made an alliance with it, and take pleasure in its friendship. Like the ancient Samaritans, "They fear the Lord and serve their own gods" (II Kings 17:33). Instead, therefore, of the Word of God and the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the only law binding upon a Christian, popular opinion, the traditions of men, the utterances of the press, the laws of expediency and of business, social customs, the fashions, "the spirit of the times," the inclinations of the flesh, decide everything for Christendom at large, in regard to the very details of daily life. The financial, æsthetic, ritualistic, spectacular and "entertainment" abominations that have crept into the house of God, are approved and defended on the ground that "*the public demands them,*" or because it is the *custom* in other Churches. God is not consulted. His opinion is not desired. More and more the Lord Jesus is ignored, crowded out, and finds Himself standing outside the door. The modern Church is, withal, satisfied with itself, happy



and optimistic, proud of its achievements, complacent and smiling as it views its riches, its costly attire, and its brilliant ornaments, with no forebodings of the awful storm already gathering; but is saying to herself, "To-morrow shall be as this day, a day great beyond measure" (Is. 56:12). Surely these are the days of Laodicea, and when that time has set in, the end is not far off.



## CHAPTER IV.

Division 3. Part I. Sec. 1, (Chaps. 4:1-11:18).

THERE are two schools of interpretation among Pre-millennarians,—the Futurist and the Historical Schools. The Futurists take their name from their holding that all the events prophesied in Part I (Chaps. 4-19), belong wholly to the *future*, none of them, having, as yet, been fulfilled. The Historical interpreters, on the other hand, claim that in Chapters 4-19 we have a sketch of the *continuous course of history* from the time of the Patmos Vision to the end of the Christian dispensation. In their view, nearly all the events foretold in these Chapters (4-19) have already been fulfilled.

But why should God have given to the world an inspired outline of General History throughout the present era? The book of Genesis was not a prophetic outline of the ordinary and progressive course of events in any country during the centuries before Christ. Not even have we in the Old Testament such an outline of *Jewish* history. Why then should we expect that God would give us a special book of prophecy to outline the course of general history during the Christian dispensation?

Moreover, in the Old Testament times, the events which God revealed beforehand by His prophetic messengers in words of solemn and awful import were

*extraordinary*, and in the nature of *overwhelming judgments*, such as the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues of Egypt, and the destruction of Jerusalem, Assyria, Tyre, Egypt, and Babylon. This alone would afford strong presumptive evidence that the events foretold in the New Testament, in a similar way, would be of the same nature.

But there is something still more decisive than this, to indicate that the events prophesied in Chapters 4-19 should not be understood to date from the time of John's vision. This is found in the first verse of the present chapter, which we regard as an important way-mark, or finger-post, placed by the Holy Spirit at this point, where there is danger of losing the road. After the Letters to the Seven Churches had been dictated to the Apostle, he sees "a door opened in heaven." and hears a voice saying to him, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must come to pass *after these things*." The rendering of the words μετὰ ταῦτα by *hereafter*, as in all our English Bibles, is extremely unfortunate. And here is where the Historical interpreters have misread the guide-board, and, in consequence, have lost their way.

Strictly speaking, *meta tauta* does not mean *hereafter*, but AFTER THESE THINGS. "Hereafter" means *from now, henceforth, from this time on*, and would be expressed in the Greek by ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν, as, in Luke 22: 69, Acts 18: 6, II Cor. 5: 16, or ἀπ' ἄρτι as in Matt. 23: 39, 26: 29, 64, and Rev. 14: 13. The expression *meta tauta* occurs twice in 4: 1; the first time it refers to the occurrences of Chapters 1-3, as John saw and heard them; the second carries us forward to

the time after the fulfillment of the things prophesied in Chapters 2 and 3. Those things were referred to in 1:19 as "*the things which are.*" The contents of the Seven Letters also corroborate the view that the whole period covered by them is seen as *now present*. Since, therefore, we are living in the time of "the things which are," all that is revealed in Division 3 (Chaps. 4-22:5) belongs to a time which is still future. Let this be clearly understood, and the interpretation of the book will be rendered comparatively easy. We would repeat, therefore, that the period referred to by the words "the things which are," is *still running its course*. The time has not yet arrived for the fulfillment of the events "which must come to pass *after these things.*" Therefore every event described or foretold in the vision, or visions, of Division 3 (4:1-22:5) is still unfulfilled. Not one of them has even *begun* to be fulfilled.

It is not to be understood that the period of which Chapters 2 and 3 are the prophetic outline, comes to an abrupt and absolute end, before the beginning of the events of Division 3, Part I, which covers the whole Tribulation period; for so much of it as belongs to the fulfillment of 2:16, 22, 23, and to the spewing time of 3:16, falls *within* the time of the Tribulation.

By attention to the various guide-boards and landmarks which abound in this section, this conviction will become more clear and irresistible. Such a key or finger-post we have in verse 4, where the "four and twenty Elders" are mentioned as being prominent among the assembled hosts in heaven, and taking a

conspicuous part in the solemn and meaningful ceremonies narrated in Chapters 4 and 5. They are also mentioned in Chapters 7, 11, 14, and 19, and in each instance, they appear as interested spectators of all that follows to the end of the Division. These ceremonies are the Prelude to the whole series of mighty and awful events about to be enacted. They present a beautiful picture of the heavenly blessedness the redeemed have *already entered upon*, before the day when the Tribulation period begins on the earth.

There should be no question nor doubt as to who the four and twenty Elders are. They are the Representatives of the Church, the Israel of God. Their mention here shows that the saints of God, of both the Old and New Testament dispensations are already with the Lord, in glory, before any of the dreadful and destroying judgments of the Great Tribulation begin to fall upon an unbelieving world. In the Old Testament, the word Elder, or Elders, (Heb. Zaqen) when used as a noun, occurs more than a hundred times. In every instance it refers to representatives of family, city, tribe, or nation. In a majority of cases, also, where the word "Elder" is met in the New Testament it is used of *representatives*. Hence the four and twenty Elders in verse 4, would instantly suggest *persons in a representative capacity*. Who then are represented by these four and twenty Elders? Here again, we believe, perfect certainty is given by the number twenty-four. Twenty-four is made up of two *twelves*; the Old Testament twelve and the New Testament twelve: the *Twelve Tribes* and the *Twelve Apostles*. Does not the book of Revelation itself, furnish

the key or explanation to this number four and twenty? In the description of the Bride,—the holy city, Jerusalem, in Chapter 21, we read that the city had “twelve gates \* \* \* and names written thereon, which are the names of the *twelve tribes of the children of Israel*” (verse 12); and in verse 14, that “the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the *twelve Apostles of the Lamb*.” This is certainly more natural and satisfactory than to derive the number from the twenty-four *courses of priests* which are mentioned in I Chron. 24 and never elsewhere. The fact also that in I Chron. 25 another series of twenty-four courses of *singers and musicians* is mentioned, makes this view to appear all the more unsatisfactory and untenable. Would it not rather be more fitting to believe that both the courses of the priests and of the singers and musicians, in I Chron., were divinely appointed with special reference, to the fundamental and composite character of the Church as seen in this passage, in Chapter 21, and also in Eph. 2:20? These twenty-four Elders, therefore, must be the representatives of the *saints of God, of both Old and New Testament economies, the part being put for the whole*. That is to say, the whole body of Old and New Testament believers are there present, *in heaven*, but are mentioned only through their representatives, the twenty-four Elders.

This way of mentioning a great body through a few of its representatives, is often met in the Old Testament.

A good illustration of this may be seen in Ex. 19:3-8. In verse 3 God gives Moses a message (verses

4-6a) to Israel, saying, "Thus shalt thou say to *the house of Jacob* and tell *the children of Israel*." In the last half of verse 6 the command is reiterated: "These are the words which thou shalt speak unto *the children of Israel*." Verse 7 informs us how Moses carried out these instructions: "And Moses came and called for *the Elders of the people*, and set before them all these words which Jehovah had commanded him." But notice the significant and inspired wording of verse 8: "And *all the people* answered together and said "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do. And Moses reported *the words of the people* unto Jehovah."

This principle is also finely illustrated in Deut. 5: 23 (compare with verse 1 of that chapter).

Another illustration of the same is found in II Chron. 5: 2-4, where the expression "all the men of Israel," in verse 3, is more particularly defined in verse 4 by the words "*even all the Elders of Israel*,"—the conjunction *Vav* (*and*), here, as also in verse 2, and often elsewhere, having the force of *even*. For further illustrations see Josh. 23: 2, 24: 1, and I Kings 8: 1-3.

Again the word "Elders," as used in Heb. 11: 2, is practically synonymous with the list of Old Testament believers that are passed in review in that wonderful chapter. And as for New Testament saints, John calls himself an Elder, in II Jno. 1, and III Jno. 1, and so does Peter, in I Peter 5: 1. Other proofs that the twenty-four Elders indicate the *saints* are given in the further description of them as sitting upon four and twenty thrones, "arrayed in white garments and on their heads crowns of gold" (verse 4). They sat upon *thrones*. None but saints are promised



thrones to sit upon (Matt. 19:28, Rev. 3:21, 20:4). Their crowns of gold also indicate that they are saints; for crowns are indicative of kingly authority: "This honor have all his saints" (Ps. 149:6-9). Gold is also a symbol of the divine nature, of which the saints are partakers (II Pet. 1:4). Their white garments are further proof, if any were needed.

It is held by some that these Elders are not of earth at all, but are to be grouped with the holy angels and the four living beings, as a part of the unfallen creation. This view of the case, they think, is supported by the change in the text of 5:9, 10 which has been followed by the Revisers.

The reading of the Revised Version is undoubtedly correct, but we are unable to see how the change affects in any way, the question as to who are represented by the Elders. The four living ones who joined with the Elders in singing the "new song," had not been "purchased out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." The pronoun "us" would therefore have been decidedly out of place in verse 9. In view of this fact, and also because of the strong textual authority for the change adopted in verse 10, the Revisers were perfectly right in omitting the pronoun "us" in verse 9, notwithstanding the slight preponderance of manuscript authority in favor of its retention. Thus also it will be seen that the third personal pronoun "them" in verse 10 is no proof that the four and twenty Elders are not here singing of *their own* redemption.

A serious objection to the view that the Elders belong to a heavenly and unfallen order of beings, is



that, so far as Scripture throws any light upon the subject, there is among created heavenly beings no distinction in respect to *age*, such as attaches to the word "Elder." For example, it cannot be said that one angel is *older* than any other angel. In other words, the term "Elder" is peculiar to *men*, and can be applied only to members of the human race. Hence it is altogether out of the question to regard the twenty-four Elders as belonging to any order of purely celestial beings.

But another and still more fatal objection to the view of which we are speaking is the fact that elsewhere in the whole Bible, the word "Elder," when used as a substantive, refers *always* to *men*, without exception. Its use in the Apocalypse, therefore, must be in harmony with its meaning elsewhere, and can denote none other than human beings—redeemed and glorified *men*.

The mention of these Elders at this point is full of meaning. Here is Scripture warrant for believing that the saints of the Lord are caught up to heaven before the Tribulation period begins, and that God has been true to His promises in Luke 21:34-36 and Rev. 3:10.

It is held by some, however, that the mention of the Elders in this place is *anticipative*, and not for the purpose of indicating that the saints are in actual possession of full salvation, and in the enjoyment of the glories of heaven, before the days of Tribulation begin. In support of this view they affirm that the rejoicing of all created things (5:13) cannot belong to the time of which these two chapters seem to speak, since the Creation will then still be in "the bondage of corruption," and "the

earth and all things in it, will be in their furthest distance from God.”\*

In answer to this objection several things are to be said:

1st. That the ceremonies and rejoicings of this vast assembly, numbering “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,” are not (anticipatively, or otherwise) in celebration of Christ’s *triumph* over His enemies, but in view of His worthiness to open the seals of the book, *i. e.*, to preside as Judge over the ongoings of judgment now to begin, and also in view of His worthiness to receive the kingdom and the power and the glory of the world which are about to become His (11:15). Surely the exceeding interest which all in heaven take in these events, is a measure of their transcendent importance, and is also intended to awaken in us a similar interest, and to supply us with a mighty incentive to bring to this subject the careful study and thought which it is worthy to receive.

2d. It is also to be said that “every created thing” is not spoken of as being “in heaven,” or “round about the throne,” as was said of the Elders. Some, indeed, are mentioned as being present; but all the rest that are “on the earth and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them,” *send up from below* their ascriptions of praise, and John hears them saying, “Unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory and the dominion, for ever and ever.”

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\* Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, p. 106.

3d. It should be said, moreover, that "every created thing" does not speak of its own full deliverance, as the Elders do of theirs.

4th. And besides, this view misses the teaching of inspiration concerning the creation, in Rom. 8:19-22, which informs us that the created universe (man excepted), is *not* in rebellion against God; "for the creation was subjected to vanity *not of its own will* (as in man's case), but by reason of him who subjected it." As a matter of fact, the created world is suffering great distress and anguish at the present condition of things,—man's rebellion against God and Satan's dominion on the earth; for "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together (with the waiting saints) until now," and is impatiently "waiting for the revealing of the sons of God." Such being the case, the participation of creation in the rejoicings of Chapters 4 and 5, is in perfect accord with the teachings of Scripture elsewhere, and what we might have expected. Man alone, of the whole created universe, is indifferent and opposed to the coming of Christ's Kingdom to the earth. No, if all the other persons of that great heavenly assemblage mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, are actual participants in these pre-tribulation ceremonies, it follows of necessity that the saints which are also represented as being *there present*, are also in the actual possession and enjoyment of the glorified life above. Note particularly 5:5 and the part there taken by one of the Elders.

Still further proof that the saints, as represented by the twenty-four Elders, are *really* in heaven (and not

*by anticipation*), may be seen in 6:9-11. The souls crying out from underneath the altar were the souls of those who had been slain *by men then living on the earth*. No one else of all the line of martyred saints, from Abel down, is there present in that company to cry out in his impatience for full satisfaction.

## CHAPTER V.

THE book which is mentioned in the first verse of this chapter, contains "the things which must come to pass after these things" (4:1 and 1:19).

The question arises, "Does it contain what is to be revealed in all the subsequent chapters of the Apocalypse? Or does it speak only of the things falling within the Tribulation period, which comes to a close at the glorious appearing of Our Lord, and the destruction of His enemies, as related in Chapter 19?"

From the mention of the seven seals with which it is sealed, we are of the opinion that it does not speak of events beyond the consummation of this present age. And therefore, we think that Chapters 20, 21 and 22 do not belong to that portion of the book which was contained under the Seventh Seal. This book was written within and on the back, indicating the *fulness* and *completeness* of the revelation to be made known by the opening of the seals, in the account given us of what was contained under each one.

It is not said of this book, as the prophet Ezekiel said of the one that was given to him, "there was written therein lamentations and mourning and woe" (Ezek. 2:10); for this book contains numerous manifestations of *grace*, as well as of judgment. There are many visions of heavenly bliss, shouts of triumph, and songs of rejoicing. It is so wonderful in all things

whereof it speaks, that of all the angelic and redeemed hosts of heaven, "no one was found worthy to open the book or to look thereon." The inspired prophet wept much because of this fact, but one of the Elders informed him that "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book and the seven seals thereof." Oh, how much had really depended on the death of the Lamb, whereby He overcame and thus proved Himself worthy to take the book and open it, and to preside, as Judge, over all the events and ongoings of judgment immediately connected with the "consummation of the Age!" And so He takes the book amid the praises and rejoicing of angels, of saints and of the creation of God.

### THE CHURCH.

At this point there seems to be need that something be said in regard to the word "Church." If the teachings of Scripture concerning the Church were rightly apprehended, there would be far greater unanimity among the friends of prophetic truth, and a much better understanding of the Apocalypse. Many understand the "Church" to be the body of believers gathered out during the period between Pentecost and the Pre-tribulation resurrection and rapture of the saints. They hold that the Church did not come into existence until the day of Pentecost, and that it will no longer be found on earth during the Tribulation; that although there will be many believers made during the Tribulation, they will belong to a different body and will not be a part of *the Church of Jesus Christ*. To this view there are many strong Scriptural objections.

The "mystery" which Paul speaks of in Eph. 3:3-5, ~~and Col. 1:26~~, as having been hidden for ages and generations, is not *the Church*, as many understand, but *a truth concerning the Church*: viz., the relation of the Gentiles to the Kingdom of God, or, in the words of inspiration, "that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (Eph. 3:6); and that they are no longer "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel," "but are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:12, 19). All this implies, in plainest terms, an organic unity of believers of the Old and New Testament dispensations. This "Commonwealth of Israel," or "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), includes more than Hebrew believers, if the words of inspiration mean anything. It is declared here that Jews and Gentiles are "fellow-members of THE BODY." The "body" of which Paul spoke is THE CHURCH,— "the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). This "Body", or "Church", was in existence before the purchase price was paid. A ransom is paid for that which exists at the time of redemption,—not for that which is not yet in existence.

Other passages might be cited which speak of this continuity and organic unity of believers in both dispensations, such as Heb. 11:40, I Cor. 10:1-4 and Jno. 4:36-38. Matt. 16:18 is cited as proof against such unity of Old Testament and New Testament believers. "Upon this rock," said Christ, "I will build my Church." From this it is concluded, that the Church had not yet come into existence, and that all



believers who had lived in the former dispensation must belong to a wholly different building. This is a hasty conclusion. For in the perfected building, "the Holy City, New Jerusalem," we find, the names of the twelve Apostles inscribed, indeed, *on the foundations*, but the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were also written *on the twelve gates* (Rev. 21:12-14). The Apostles are seen first in the order of *building*, although the twelve tribes had been first in the order of *time*. Buildings are often put up in the present day in a similar way, the foundation not being laid until the material for the superstructure is much of it already prepared. A part of this superstructure are the Old Testament saints. All this is set forth in these striking words of Eph. 2:19-22: "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone: in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a Holy Temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

How else can Jno. 10:16 be explained, if this unity and continuity of which we are speaking be denied? "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must lead, ( ἀγαγεῖν ) and they shall hear my voice; and they shall *become* ( γενήσονται ) *one flock*, one shepherd." In the light of all these passages, we feel no timidity (nor is there temerity), in affirming that "the Church" of which Stephen spoke in Acts 7:38, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

was "THE CHURCH"—the same body as that of which Paul was speaking in Eph. 5:23-32.

In saying this we do not lose sight of the fact that there are certain important differences in the two periods, or dispensations. Scripture is clear and positive on this point. Pentecost marked the beginning of a dispensation which differed as much from the preceding one, as the Mosaic dispensation differed from anything which had gone before it. The difference consisted chiefly in the relationship of God to His people.

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of Christ was poured out upon His Church, and ever since, has indwelt and infilled it, using it as God's special and peculiar channel through which to work and manifest His saving power and grace to a lost and perishing world.

There had never before been anything like it, save in the case of Him who is the Head of the Church. For on the day of His baptism, the Holy Spirit had descended and rested upon Him, and thereafter during all the time of His public ministry, had fully possessed Him, working in and through Him with absolute freedom. The day of His baptism in the Jordan and of the greater baptism which immediately followed, we would therefore regard, rather than Pentecost, as the day when the Church as we now have it, began to be. Not that the Church had never before been in existence, but that at this time it received the form, or reached the condition, which we may call "*the full corn in the ear.*" But previous to that time there must have been also "*the blade,*" and "*then the ear.*"

All this is further confirmed by a study of Galatians 4: 1-6, where Paul tells us that the believing Jew in the former Dispensation was heir to and lord of all that belongs to the Christian in the new Dispensation. He was as truly a son under the old Dispensation as he is in the new. The great difference was in respect to his development and privileges. Under the old Dispensation (under *law*), the believer was a *babe*, an *infant* (νήπιος), and was dealt with accordingly; but in the new (under *grace*), he has attained the age and privileges of manhood,—and is treated as an *adult son*. For a more detailed exposition of this passage, see Appendix D, near the end.

What we are now laying emphasis upon, is *the continuity and oneness* of “the Church of the living God” during all the past centuries; and that from the passages already quoted, it seems to be clear that this body has preserved its identity under all the forms which it has pleased God to give it.

All of these considerations seem to justify and necessitate what has been said concerning the four and twenty Elders, as signifying that the whole body of the Old Testament and New Testament believers are prophetically seen as being actually *in heaven* and participating in the ceremonies described in Chapters 4 and 5. That is to say, Old and New Testament saints will be raised from the dead, and the living saints will be caught up with them to heaven, *before the period of Tribulation sets in*.

The *silence* of Scripture may also legitimately be appealed to in this matter; for if the Old Testament

saints are not included in the number of those represented by the twenty-four Elders, is not Scripture singularly and unaccountably silent regarding their resurrection and the time of it?

And as Scripture clearly teaches that the Church was in existence before Pentecost, so too, we are equally certain the Book of Revelation plainly teaches that all believers in Christ to the very end of the Tribulation period, are also a part of the Church—a part of the *Bride*,—members of the Body; for the marriage of the Lamb and the Great Marriage Supper do not take place until the last contingent of Tribulation saints has been taken up to heaven. Not till then is the Bride spoken of as having “made herself ready.” Not till the marriage supper has been celebrated, does the Lamb descend to earth with “the armies in heaven”—of which the saints are a part—to cut off all His enemies, in the final conflict, and to inaugurate His Millennial reign. All this is described with great clearness in Chapter 19. Still further proof that the Church continues in existence on the earth during the Tribulation period, is found in 12:17, in the reference to “the rest of the woman’s seed.” Also in Rev. 20:4, where the souls and *resurrected bodies* (implied in ἐξήσαν ) of the Tribulation saints are seen *on thrones* and *exercising judgment*, the same as other saints.

After the heavenly prelude, or ceremonies of Chapters 4 and 5 have been described, there follows the vision in which the events of the Tribulation period are set forth in prophetic outline.

## THE TRIBULATION.

By the Tribulation, we are to understand the time of unexampled trial and suffering which our Lord predicted to the disciples on the Mount of Olives (Matt. 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21), and which is also foretold in many other parts of Scripture. Isaiah calls it "the day of vengeance of our God" (Is. 61:2); it is the time "when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Is. 2:19, 21). In Dan. 8:19 it is spoken of as the "time of the indignation." It is the time when the unbelieving world will be baptised with fire.\* Some there are who hold that the Jews are to be the principal sufferers in the great Tribulation, and that the scene of it will be limited chiefly to Palestine, or, as many others affirm, to the "Old Roman World." During a portion of this time Israel will, indeed, have to drink to the very dregs, the cup of tribulation and anguish. It will be peculiarly "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). Palestine, will, indeed be the scene of special and peculiar afflictions, when the judgments of God and the fiercest persecutions which the Antichrist can devise will fall simultaneously upon a still hardened and unbelieving Israel. But Scripture speaks of the Tribulation as something that "shall come upon all them that dwell on the face of *all the earth*" (Luke 21:35). In Rev. 3:10 it is spoken of as "the hour of trial which is to come upon *the whole world* to try them that dwell on the earth." See also Rev. 8:7-13, 9:18-20 and elsewhere, in which the fearful judgments are seen to be *world-wide* in extent.

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\* See Appendix B.

Nor is this a matter of surprise; for before the end of the age, the Gentile nations of the world will have rejected the Son and the testimony of His Word, with the same aggravating obduracy of heart as that with which Israel had signified its repudiation of His claims. The "times of the Gentiles" have been characterized by increased light and opportunity. Consequently the Gentiles are involving themselves in the same degree of guilt as the Jews; so that in punishment, as in guilt, it may be said again, "there is no distinction."

The sufferings of this period are from two sources. They are, in part, judgments sent by God upon an unbelieving world; and in part, also, they are inflicted on the people of God then living on the earth, by the Antichrist and his subjects, at the instigation of Satan.

Let us keep clearly in mind, in all our study of this section of the book (Chaps. 4-19), that in it we have an *inspired Program of the Tribulation and of the Coming of the Lord*.

The visions which John sees in Chapters 4 to 19 are prophetic outlines of events belonging to "that hour of trial which is to come upon the whole world to try them that dwell on the earth." No other book in the Bible, nor all the passages bearing on this subject in all the other books of the Bible, give us such complete and detailed information concerning that brief period. The Apocalypse is not generally regarded as containing an "official program" of that time; but such is the case. Here is a perfect thesaurus, or treasure-house of information on the subject. Hence the importance of a careful study of the book.

The blessedness spoken of those who read and hear



what the Spirit saith unto the Churches on this all important topic, consists, in a large measure, in the incentive it gives to that preparation and watchfulness which will assure them of being kept "from the hour of trial." Such an assurance is exceedingly blessed, as many thousands of watching saints can testify to-day. And yet, despite the fact that there are such assurances given in other books of the Bible, there are some Christians who look forward to the Tribulation as something from which there is no escape, *except by death*. They believe that the saints must pass *through* the fiery trial. In this they "do err, not knowing the Scripture nor the power of God." Apart from the testimony of this section of the Apocalypse which we are now studying (Chaps. 4-19), the books of the Old and New Testaments contain decidedly more and clearer utterances concerning the pre-tribulation deliverance of the saints, than the Old Testament gave concerning the deity and the virgin-birth of the Messiah. Already in Chapter 3 (Letter to Philadelphia), attention has been called to three of these remarkable promises (Rev. 3: 10, Luke 21: 34-36, and Mal. 3: 17—4: 3).

We would also submit this question to the earnest consideration of those who see no hope for a pre-tribulation deliverance: What is the meaning of all of God's warnings in the Old Testament? Were they merely *predictions*,—nothing more than *announcements* of coming ill, from which there was no escape? Were they not rather alarm bells, and danger signals, for the purpose of arousing men and leading them to seek the means of escape from the judgments threatened? This is clearly the lesson to be drawn from



Noah's preaching before the Flood; from the visit of the angels to Sodom; from Jonah's mission to Nineveh; and from other warnings, to Pharaoh, to Nebuchadnezzar, and to Israel.

What also is the meaning to us of the fact that no Christian perished in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus? Christ had told them how they might escape, and by obedience to His instructions they all withdrew from the city before the days of its fearful tribulation began.

There are types in the New Testament, as well as in the Old. Here is one of them. The escape of the Christians from Jerusalem before the terrible sufferings and trials attending the siege and destruction of that city, in the reign of Vespasian, is regarded, and rightly, too, we think, as a type of the greater pre-tribulation deliverance in the days of "the Coming Prince," the last of the Cæsars. Surely in all these cases it is plainly meant that we should see God's gracious purposes toward men, and His desire to save them, if they will, from the furnace of "the great tribulation," in "the time of the end."

The promise which so sweetly distils from all these instances, is not that He will sustain them *in* "the hour of trial," but that He will keep them *from* it, by giving deliverance before it begins. The hour of trial is for those who will not "watch," nor keep "the word of His patience."

Such is also the lesson to be drawn from II Pet. 2: 1-9. The argument of the Apostle is this: If God spared not the rebellious angels, neither will He spare rebellious men. If He visited the Antediluvian world

and the cities of the plain with overwhelming judgments, He will certainly overthrow the wicked by dreadful judgments in the coming days. In sparing Noah and Lot and delivering them before the judgments fell, He has proved His power to spare the godly in any similar emergency, and the plain inference is that He will deliver them in the time of the great Tribulation. Nay, the passage contains much more than an "inference." Coming as it does from an inspired Apostle, it is no less than a strong and positive *assurance* that He will deliver them before the Tribulation begins.

This divine promise also shines out with great clearness from both parables in Matt. 25. From the peculiar setting of these two parables,—between the last verse of Chapter 24 and verse 30 of Chapter 25 (in both of which the weeping and gnashing of teeth are mentioned), it is apparent that they refer to the same event, and are both speaking of the same two classes of professing Christians,—those who enter at once into "the joy of the Lord," and those who are left in the "outer darkness," and remain on the earth to experience the unexampled sufferings of the great Tribulation. The kernel of the parable of the Ten Virgins is, *Watch, be ready*, and you will escape "the weeping and gnashing of teeth." The lesson of the parable of the Ten Talents is, *Be faithful* "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," and you will prevail to escape the outer darkness of the Tribulation days. The "outer darkness" and "the weeping and gnashing of teeth" here spoken of, do not, as generally supposed, refer to hell and the torments of the

lake of fire, but to sufferings *on the earth* in the time of the Tribulation judgments. After the saints, "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) shall have been caught up out of it, the darkness will be such as "may be felt" (Ex. 10:21). Weeping and gnashing of teeth are not predicated of the same individuals. They belong to very different classes. The *weeping* will be for those who find themselves too late to enter with the Bridegroom into the place of joy and feasting, but who will forthwith make themselves ready and will patiently endure all the sufferings and persecutions that will be inflicted upon them in that dark hour. The "*gnashing of teeth*" is not expressive of pain and torments, as may be seen by a study of the expression where it occurs elsewhere in Scripture, as in Job 16:9, Ps. 35:16, 37:12, Lam. 2:16 and Acts 7:54. It is a term indicative of the madness and rage with which the enemies of God's people sometimes set upon them. In Matt. 24 and 25 it relates to the fury and violence with which the Dragon and his seed, in the last days of their power, will turn upon and "make war with the remnant of the woman's seed" (Rev. 12:17), in "the hour of trial" from which Christ promises to keep those who keep the word of His patience.

It was to be expected that a truth of such importance would be foreshadowed by Old Testament type, in the Levitical law of the offerings, where indeed, every great doctrine of the Christian faith is outlined with clearness and beauty. And this is precisely what we find in the law of the offerings of the first-fruits, as will be shown farther on, in Chapter 7.

Our Lord rebuked the Sadducees because they had

never seen a proof of the resurrection in Ex. 3:6: "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you (notice the pronoun *you*) by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Matt. 22:31, 32). It is not to our credit that we require a kind of proof that is little short of spectacular and miraculous,—proof that is simply irresistible. Nor is the proof that God has given unsubstantial and imaginary. We are persuaded that the evidence already adduced in support of the doctrine of a pre-tribulation deliverance, is satisfactory and incontestable. God has removed this great truth far away from the borders of theory and uncertainty into the realm of absolute and most blessed assurance, by the use of four different lines of evidence: (1) by Old Testament type; (2) by New Testament parable; (3) by numerous historical precedents; and (4) by clear and unequivocal promises. The first of these arguments,—that by *type*, should, in itself, be sufficient to set our minds at rest. Without the other three, we might have expected it, nay, we might have *known* it. Here, too, we seem to hear the voice of the Master, "If it were *not* so I would have told you." What then is to be said, when to this, we add the yet plainer testimony by parable and historical precedent, and then to all these are added the straight-forward, crystal-clear promises of Luke 21:36, Rev. 3:10 and Mal. 3:17—4:3, not to speak of all the other prophetic announcements to the same effect in the visions of the Apocalypse?

No saint goes *through* the Tribulation. No saint goes *into* the Tribulation, unless the five foolish virgins

are also to be counted among the "saints," when the Bridegroom comes. But they are not so regarded, and rightly so. The true saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, before the horologe of heaven strikes "the hour of trial." Those who *become* saints in the time of the Tribulation will be caught up *out of it*, or *raised* from the dead *during* the Tribulation. No less than three such Tribulation raptures and resurrections are indicated in the book. Startling as this will seem to our readers, we urge them not to reject it without considering carefully the proofs that will be given from the book itself. We are to accept nothing without Scriptural proof. The sad fact with us is, the grace and power of God are so high and wonderful that we cannot rise to an adequate comprehension of His plain declarations concerning them.

## CHAPTER VI.

IN this chapter the events of the Tribulation period begin to be outlined. The breaking of the seven seals marks the successive unfoldings of God's purposes in judgment, the opening of each seal disclosing a new series of divinely directed events. Up to the time when this Revelation was made to God's servants, the events of the Tribulation days were hidden from the knowledge of men and angels, and known only in the counsels of God. But as each successive seal was opened, these mysteries, or concealed purposes of God, were unlocked and brought to light. The seals are so designated because they held fast-closed and hidden the events belonging to this time, but which had often been obscurely referred to in the Old and New Testament books. But now, since the seals have been opened, there is no longer any mystery. God has *drawn the veil aside*. That is the meaning of the word "Revelation." Whenever a seal is opened, some judgment of God visits the earth. The opening of the First Seal marks the beginning of the Tribulation period. The Seventh Seal continues until the very end of that period, the time when Christ cuts off all His enemies, as described in Chapter 19. The Seventh Seal contains within it the Seven Trumpets; and the Seventh Trumpet contains within itself the Seven Bowl, or Vial plagues. Hence we may say that the contents of that



part of the roll which is sealed by the Seventh Seal, are the Seven Trumpet and the Seven Vial judgments. The relation of the Seals to the Trumpets, and of the Trumpets to the Bowls, may be illustrated by a sky-rocket. A rocket sometimes while sweeping in its course through the dark sky, explodes into a number of fiery balls. One of these balls burning longer than the others, in like manner, bursts into other and more lurid balls of fire. Such we understand to be the relation between these three series of Tribulation judgments. The Seventh Seal is never described by itself. It bursts, so to speak, into the yet more fearful Seven *Trumpet judgments* which are described as such; and, in like manner, when the Seventh Trumpet sounds, no description of it follows, because the Seventh Trumpet judgment (the Third Woe), is to be described later on, *as the Seven Plagues*, when the Bowls, or Vials are poured out.

When each of the first four seals is opened, one of the four living beings\* cries as with a voice of thunder, "COME"! (R. V.). The command is not addressed to John, but to the riders on the horses. This command is from the Lamb. It is Christ who opens all of the Seven Seals. These judgments proceed from

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\* Although the description here given of the Living Ones (not "beasts," as in the A. V., but "Living Creatures" (R. V.), or better still "*Living Ones*"), differs from that of the Cherubim, in Ezek. 1 and 10: 20, 21, and from that of the Seraphim, in Is. 6: 2, 3, it seems probable that all three accounts refer to the same glorious beings. The subject is a difficult one and full of mystery; but that explanation seems to us the most satisfactory which regards them as symbols "of the four great earth-tribes (Man, the Fowls, the Cattle, and the Beasts of the earth), with which God has made a covenant that He will never again destroy them utterly from the face of the earth." Pember's *Earth's Earliest Ages*, Chap. 8.



Him; for the Father "hath given all judgment unto the Son" (Jno. 5:22).

This manner of summoning the instruments of judgment is unfamiliar to us in the West. It is peculiarly oriental. The writer has often been in the Audience Chambers of Turkish Governors, and heard them summon a servant, who was waiting in an adjoining room, by calling in a loud voice "Gel"! "*Come*"! So, when it is time for judgment to begin on the earth, it is much more solemn and dramatic to summon the instrument of judgment, not by the pressure of an electric button, but after the ancient and oriental manner as described four times in the first seven verses of Chapter 6.

The hour for judgment has struck, and now the man. Immediately at the summons, the first rider comes forth sitting on a white horse. The white horse is a symbol of kingship. But still more definite is the meaning of the crown.

The king is not Christ, as so many have supposed. It is He who opens this seal. He also opens each succeeding one. There would, then, be something incongruous in regarding Him as also the rider on the horse. And besides, the usual description which identifies Christ so clearly, whenever He is mentioned in this book is altogether wanting here. This rider on the white horse is the last of the Cæsars, who receives the throne of the dragon (13:2). He is the "little horn" of Daniel 7:8, 20, 21; "the Beast" of Rev. 13:1-8; "the Antichrist" of I John 2:18; The "Man of Sin," "the Son of Perdition" of II Thes. 2:3. The first appearance of this rider is that of a mighty conqueror. The description given in verse 2 is brief indeed, but it

shows him to be a person of most remarkable personality and genius. It accords perfectly with what is said of him elsewhere, from which we know that in a very brief time, he finds himself a very king of men, with a world-wide influence and authority. Many regard him as possessing a dominion co-extensive with the old Roman Empire; but in Chapter 13:2, 7, 8, it is plainly shown that he will be a prince with a far more extensive dominion than any Cæsar ever yet held.

The Scriptures have given us much information concerning the personality and character of the Antichrist—"the Man of Sin." See specially Rev. 13:2-8, II Thes. 2:3-10, Dan. 7:25, 8:23-25, 11:36-45.

It appears that at the outset of his career, the Antichrist does not reveal his true Satanic character. His conquests are not all won by the sword. Like Antiochus Epiphanes, his prototype, he will gain the kingdom through flatteries and diplomacy (Dan. 11:21, 23). Having been endowed by Satan with authority and leader-like qualities, He will work with Satanic skill, "with all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceit of unrighteousness" (II Thes. 2:9, 10).

It may seem strange to many that the first of God's awful judgments in the last days, will be the coming of this rider on the white horse, this peaceful conqueror, instead of some destructive and world-extensive calamity or plague. But why not? What could be worse? He is the "Man of Sin," "The Son of Perdition," an incarnation of Satan. The world, *as a whole*, will have heard the testimony of the Gospel (Matt. 24:14). The world, *as a whole*, has reaffirmed the decision of Israel, "we will not have this man to

reign over us" (Luke 19:14). The nations have rejected Christ as their king. They, too, like Israel, have said, "we have no king but Cæsar." And so one of the Cæsars is, in very truth, sent to be their king. The Antichrist is, in fact, a Roman Emperor,—the last of the Cæsars. When he comes, he finds the world ready to receive him; for God has sent upon its inhabitants the "strong delusion," the "working of error that they should believe a lie" (II Thes. 2:11). Many centuries ago Jeremiah prophesied of Israel, "thou wilt give them hardness of heart, thy curse unto them" (Lam. 3:65). In like manner also, as another dispensation draws to a close, the same will be true of others than the sons of Israel, when blindness, hardness of heart, and the rule of the Cæsar, are sent as God's first curse upon a Christ rejecting and truth repudiating world.

When the Second Seal is broken, the <sup>red horse</sup> second rider — war comes forth. To him "it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another" (ver. 4). Anarchy and war break forth to desolate the earth. The saints, who are "the salt of the earth," have been removed, and all things that make for peace and stability in society have been withdrawn. As a natural result, disorder, violence, and bloodshed set in.

The opening of the Third Seal brings universal fam- <sup>Black horse</sup> ine to the earth, as is indicated by wheat and barley bringing famine prices,—the former selling at about five and a half dollars a bushel, of our money, and representing a value of several times that amount, in the first century. <sup>Famine</sup>

Fearful mortality all over the world, follows the

opening of the Fourth Seal, when wars, famine, wild beasts, and the invariable companion of famine, viz., pestilence, combine to do the work to which God now appoints them. (Compare Ezek. 14: 13-21).

It need not be assumed that one plague ends before another begins. There is doubtless an overlapping of one upon the other. If our interpretation of the First Seal and the rider on the white horse is correct, then it appears that the first judgment is one that extends from the beginning to the very close of the Tribulation period.

When the Fifth Seal is opened there is suggested, rather than described, what is taking place on the earth at that time. In it we get a glimpse of the terrible persecutions which the dragon has stirred up against the woman and the remnant of her seed (12: 17). The saints had all been raised and caught up before the beginning of this period. They had ascended with resurrection and changed *bodies*. But a new seed of godly people has succeeded them, who in their fidelity to God, have sealed their testimony by martyrdom. "The souls underneath the altar" are souls of Tribulation saints. Their cry, "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth," shows that these persecutions had been in progress some considerable time. The reply made to them indicates that they must still continue for a time.

Notice that it was the *souls* of the martyred saints that cried from under the altar. Their bodies were still in the grave. This marks them as distinct from those already translated. Disembodied souls long to be

clothed upon (II Cor. 5:2-4). And God, in His grace, in answer to their cry, and also in recognition of their faithful testimony, gives them white robes, as a covering, during the period of their further waiting.

All that is related as following the opening of the Sixth Seal, needs to be taken *literally*—just as it stands. Not one item of it should be treated symbolically. Few things could be more mischievous and pernicious than to regard the language of the Apocalypse as being, *in the main, figurative, or symbolical*. This has been the starting point of innumerable follies and misconceptions in its interpretation. It is this kind of treatment that has done so much to bring into contempt the study of the prophetic portions of God's Word.

The events prophesied in verses 12-16 are a fulfillment of Joel 2:30, 31, Isaiah 2:19, Matt. 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, Luke 21:25-27. No other passage in the Apocalypse furnishes so many proofs of identity. Those events are thus described in Matt. 24:29-31. "But immediately, after the Tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The adverb τότε, *then*, connects the coming of the Son of Man and the gathering of the elect,

very closely with the startling appearances in the heavens. The consternation and terror of the inhabitants of the earth, described in verses 15-17, are the same as are mentioned in Matt. 24:30, and also in Rev. 1:7, and Zech. 12:10; for in them all, the "mourning" is connected with the *"coming of the Son of Man," and with their seeing Him*. Their prayer to be hid "from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb" (verse 16) leaves nothing omitted from the passage we are now studying that has been mentioned in all the passages just referred to. For it is here implied that the Son of Man now comes in person "on the clouds of heaven." Zech. 12:10-14 speaks only of the mourning as affecting the house of Israel; but all the other passages make it clear that it extends to "all the tribes of the earth." We do not mean that this is the great and exhaustive fulfillment of Zech. 12:10-14, for it is not. That will come later, at the end of the Tribulation days.

That Christ will come in person, on the clouds of heaven, in the interval between the sixth and the seventh Trumpets, may be adduced as further proof that He will come in like manner in the time of the Sixth Seal. In the great Harvest scene in Chapter 14:14-16, we are told that "one like unto the Son of Man" is seen sitting on a white cloud, as He descends to reap the earth. This can be none other than Christ Himself, for the words by which He is there designated—"one like unto the Son of Man"—are the exact words found in 1:13, which He Himself explains for us in verses 17, 18, of that chapter: "I am the first and



the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades," and still more positively in 2: 18: "*These things saith the Son of God*, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire and His feet are like unto burnished brass" (compare with 1: 14, 15). This gives us perfect certainty as to who is meant by "one like unto the Son of Man" in 14: 14.

Since therefore Christ will come in person, on the clouds of heaven at the time of the Tribulation *Harvest*, between the sixth and seventh Trumpets, why should there be any doubt that He will come in person also in the time of which the last verses of Chapter 6 speak, when the *First-fruits* of the Tribulation are gathered, between the sixth and seventh Seals?

Here, then, is another coming of the Bridegroom for another contingent of His people, in accordance with His sure word of promise in John 14: 3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself." The "coming" which is promised in John 14: 3 can be for none other than the *resurrected saints*, and not, as is so commonly held, for the *souls* of believers *at their death*. Christ does not come for us at our death. He did not come for the first Christian martyr when he died. Stephen "looked up steadfastly *into heaven*, and saw Jesus standing," not by his side, to bear him home, but "at the right hand of God," as if to welcome him on his arrival. Luke 16: 22 informs us that it is by the agency of angels that the *souls* of believers are, at death, borne to the presence of the Lord.

Matthew and Mark tell us that at this time the Son



of Man sends forth His angels to gather the elect. It is true, Rev. 6 is silent with regard to this gathering of the elect; but the Spirit of God assumes that the reader of this book is familiar with the other parts of Scripture. Not only in the interpretation of this passage, but also of many others in this book, the plain teachings of the prophetic word, wherever found, are to be used to fill in details that have been omitted in the Apocalyptic account. In this He greatly magnifies the importance of the study of the other prophetic books also. But although Rev. 6 is silent in regard to this gathering of the elect, the next chapter assumes it, and furnishes most clear and satisfactory evidence of it in verses 9-17.

It should be observed here that the word "elect," in these passages, refers, not, as some hold, to the *Jewish people*, as a *nation*, but to the *saints of God*, His "chosen ones" of *every nation*. The word "elect," in Matt. 24:31, Mark 13:20, 22, 27, is used with precisely the same meaning that it has in Luke 18:7, Rom. 8:33 and Col. 3:12.

Matthew and Mark speak of these events as occurring "after the Tribulation of those days." This does not mean, necessarily, *at the end of the whole Tribulation period*. We have already seen that a time of fearful Tribulation is revealed by the opening of the Fifth Seal. God has definitely promised to shorten the days of the Tribulation for the sake of the elect (Matt. 24:22, Mark 13:20). This promise has reference as much to the Tribulation in "the time of the end" as it does to the one in the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. And it would seem to

have been His purpose to "shorten" them for His elect, still more, by means of the Tribulation raptures. And although tribulation more terrible and fierce will be witnessed after the Seventh Seal is opened, this Mid-Tribulation rapture is correctly spoken of as occurring "after the Tribulation of those days."

Moreover it is not improbable that the portentous phenomena seen among the heavenly bodies, the mourning of the tribes of the earth, and, in fact, all that is foretold in the various passages here cited, will be repeated before the Seventh Trumpet sounds. Two of the details, at least, of Matt. 24:30-31, are seen in 14:14-16, (1) *one like unto the Son of Man sitting on the white cloud*; and (2), *the reaping of the earth*, which means the gathering of the elect. That the phenomena of verses 12-17 and Matt. 24 will be repeated also, in the time of the Seventh Bowl or Plague, is evident from 16:17-21, and from Ezek. 38:18-23, both of which speak of the same event. Notice the close agreement of the passage in Ezekiel with the closing verses of Chapters 6 and 16: "Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him unto all my mountains, saith the Lord Jehovah: every man's sword shall be against his brother: and with pestilence and with blood will I enter into judgment

with him: and I will rain upon him, and upon his hordes, and upon the many peoples that are with him an overflowing shower, and (*even*) great hailstones, fire and brimstone. And I will magnify myself and sanctify myself, and I will make myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am Jehovah."

It is unfortunate that all the many statements of Scripture on the subject have been taken as referring to *a single coming, a single resurrection, and a single rapture*. From a misunderstanding at this point has sprung the controversy whether the rapture is to be a Pre-Tribulation or a Post-Tribulation rapture.

In this we are reminded of the long and sanguinary war between the Big-Endians and the Little-Endians of Swift, over the question whether an egg to be eaten should be broken on the large end or on the small end.

The Bible is as clear on the subject of the rapture of the saints as the Old Testament Scriptures were concerning our Lord's Advent. They spoke of *two* comings; but Israel saw in them only *one* coming. Let us not make a similar mistake in regard to the "gathering of the elect." Failure to apprehend this greater fulness of revealed truth on this subject has resulted in repeated attempts to discredit belief in the Pre-Tribulation rapture. If Christ's coming is to be preceded by all the events foretold in Chapters 6-19, how, say they, is it possible for His coming to be *imminent*? and what ground has any one for saying that He may come any hour or any moment? But Matt. 24:42, 44, 25:13, Luke 12:35-40, 21:34-36,

and other passages like them, seem fully to justify the expectation of those who regard the coming of the *Bridegroom* as an ever-present possibility. We do not hold that when the saints are aroused by the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet Him," He will come as the Leader of "the Armies that are in heaven," as described in Chapter 19. The Bridegroom does not *appear* in Matt. 25:1-13. The saints are summoned to go forth "*to meet Him.*" This agrees with finest exactness with 1 Thes. 4:17, where the resurrected and the living saints "are caught up in the clouds, *to meet the Lord in the air.*" This is truly *a coming*, but who would confuse it with that one spoken of in 2 Thes. 1:7-10?

The Second Coming of Christ should not be regarded as the event of a *moment*, but rather a *series* of events, covering a *period* of time. Failure to see this has been fruitful of misunderstandings.

The expression "The Second Coming" is not a Scriptural expression, and is therefore apt to be misleading. It is, however, a convenient term by which to distinguish the coming of Christ, which is yet *future*, from His *first* advent, nineteen hundred years ago, which was not a single event, but embraced the whole time of His manifestation in the flesh, beginning with His birth, and including also the several returns from the presence of the Father, between the resurrection and His last and public ascension.

So the Second Coming should not be regarded as limited to a single event, or moment of time, nor to a particular day, but a term embracing the period, full of events, between His coming as the Bridegroom

for the first contingent of saints, and His coming "in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thes. 1:8).

Would the Bridegroom come for His Bride attired like a warrior,—in raiment stained with the life-blood of His enemies, as described in Isaiah 63:1-6 and Rev. 19:11-16? Such an incongruity as this is involved in the view that there will be but a single coming in the time of the end.

## CHAPTER VII.

BETWEEN the Sixth and the Seventh Seals there seems to be a lull in the ongoings of judgment. The first seven verses of Chapter 7 speak of such a cessation while the sealing of the 144,000 is in progress. The servants of God who are sealed on their foreheads are *Israelites*, literal descendants of Abraham. They had not been caught up with the saints mentioned in verses 9-17, *because they were not "ready."* When the Son of Man appears, "coming on the clouds of heaven," as He will do, in the time of the Sixth Seal, then, we believe, as a kind of *first-fruits* of the fulfillment of Zech. 12: 10, the veil will be taken away from before the faces of this large body of Israelites, who, after their sealing, will be a mighty army of the Lord, a tremendous power for righteousness, during the next stage, or period, of the Great Tribulation, now about to begin. Inasmuch as this 144,000 is mentioned again and described more fully in 14: 1, they will be spoken of more in detail at that point.

The "great multitude" spoken of in the remaining half of this chapter is the great host of saints that were resurrected and caught up after the opening of the Sixth Seal. There should be no question that such a rapture as this will take place at that time. That is the meaning of this remarkable passage, occurring just at this point in the program of the Great Tribu-



lation period. What other meaning can be given to the declaration of the Elder to the Apostle John, that these "are they that come out of the Great Tribulation"? Notice here the definite article "the," which has rightly been restored in the Revised. It is not that they have come out of great *tribulations in general*, which may have been suffered at any time during the present dispensation, but that they have been *in* and have now come *out of* "THE GREAT TRIBULATION." There is but *one* such. The phrase "passing *through* the Tribulation," it should be observed, is one of the current expressions of the last few years, which has added confusion to the minds of many. This great multitude are taken "*out of* the Great Tribulation." They were *in* it, but did not pass *through* it, having been delivered *from* it before the worst stages of it had set in.

Does the *Church* pass through the Tribulation? *Yes*, and *No*. The wise virgins who have oil enough are taken up before the Tribulation begins. Another body of believers (also a part of the Church), this "great multitude" of which we have just been speaking, are caught up *out of the midst of* the Tribulation, and thus escape the heavier judgments and the more grievous woes that are to follow. And we shall yet again meet (15:2-4) a *third* body of saints, also a part of the Church, who, after passing through these deeper waters of trouble, will escape the still more fearful and terrible judgments that begin after their translation; for at all times during those dreadful days, the promises of God, as we find them in Mal. 3:17-4:3, Luke 21:36 and Rev. 3:10, will still be in force.

Oh, the wonderful grace and loving-kindness of our God! In wrath He remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2).

Objection has been made that believers of the Tribulation period cannot belong to the Church, the Body of Christ, because this view is supposed to be precluded by 1 Cor. 15:23, 24: "But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father."

From this it is claimed that there can be but a single resurrection of the saints, because, since Christ is the first-fruits, all others must comprise the *harvest*. They also who reject the Pre-Tribulation resurrection and rapture bring forward this argument in support of their view. The same argument will also be urged, no doubt, against any resurrection *during* the Tribulation.

In reply to these objections, two things are to be said: *First*, if the Pre-Tribulation resurrection and rapture be the harvest of which Christ is the first-fruits, would it not be permissible, by the law of types, to regard the saints, or believers, of the whole Tribulation period as the  *gleanings*  of the harvest, and therefore of one body with all the other saints? *Second*, in order, however, to answer both objections, or rather, let us say, in order rightly to understand the whole subject, there is need of a more careful study of the Levitical law of the offerings of first-fruits. The true and deeper significance of these offerings, we believe, has not been rightly apprehended. For, while the *first* of the three offerings has, indeed, been correctly inter-

preted, it is greatly to be regretted that this interpretation should not have been taken as the key to unlock the meaning of the other two.

The offerings of the first-fruits were symbols of the resurrection and presentation of the sons of God, or, as Ex. 23: 19 beautifully expresses it, "*bringing them into the house of Jehovah thy God.*" The presentation of the sheaf of the first-fruits of the barley harvest was a prophecy, in symbol, of the resurrection and ascension of *our Lord*. The Pentecostal offering of the first-fruits of the wheat harvest was a type of the resurrection of *saints, and of their presentation* to God, before His throne *in glory*. This offering, however, is commonly understood to symbolize the great events recorded in the second Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, viz., *the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church*; or, as stated by some, the presentation of the *Church, on the day of Pentecost*, as the first-fruits of Christ's death and resurrection. Many also speak of Pentecost as the *birthday of the Church*. All this is to miss the deeper meaning of the symbolism. The offering of the first-fruits, let us repeat, always symbolizes *resurrection, and the presentation before God of those who are raised*. What is narrated in the Second Chapter of the Acts was no more the complete fulfillment of all that was symbolized in the offering of Lev. 23:15-17, than the *spiritual* quickening spoken of in Rom. 6:4-13, 8:11, Eph. 2:1-6 and Col. 3:1 is all there is of the resurrection. The last four passages just cited are not speaking at all of the resurrection of the body, but of a *spiritual* quickening of believers, who are "mortal," to be sure, but

who are not yet physically dead,—a quickening in which the “mortal body” also participates.\* Such indeed was the quickening witnessed on the day of Pentecost, in the *endowment* of the disciples with power, and in the *regeneration* of the three thousand converted on that day. Marvellous as were the events of that day, they were, nevertheless, but an *earnest*, scarcely more than an *adumbration* of the great event of which all offerings of first-fruits invariably speak, viz., the *resurrection*, when the entire being of man shall be quickened with the perfect and permanent gift of life and power, and shall be set “before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy.”

No less than three presentations of first-fruits were required by the Mosaic law. This, on the face of it, would seem to foreshadow and necessitate *three first-fruit resurrections*.

I. The *first* of these offerings of first-fruits was made at the beginning of the barley harvest. This was the one commanded in Lev. 23: 10, 11, when “the sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest” was presented “on the morrow after the Sabbath” of the Passover. This was a type and prophecy of Christ rising from the dead and ascending to the Father on the morning of His resurrection.\* There is great significance and beauty in the form of this offering,—a *sheaf*, just as it came from the field, without threshing. Even the

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\* For a fuller treatment of Rom. 8: 11, see Appendix D. *Adoption*.

\* Contrary to the common belief regarding the time of it, the ascension and exaltation of our Lord at the right hand of the Father, must be held to have taken place the same morning as His resurrection, as is clear from John 20: 17, Acts 13: 33, Luke 13: 32 and other passages.

straw and chaff of this sheaf were no less acceptable, as an offering, than the grain itself in the sheaf. Of Christ alone is this true. He was the beginning of a new creation. All that was in Him, body, soul, and spirit, were of the new creation. There was nothing of the flesh to be threshed and winnowed out. But with all other men the case is very different. The straw and the chaff represent all in a Christian that belongs to the old nature, the flesh. The grain is a symbol of the new life,—the new creation which has been formed within the old. The straw and chaff have been closely and inseparably connected with the grain, but the time comes when they must be separated. Before the Christian can be presented to God, the straw and chaff must be broken up and winnowed out. But with Christ there is nothing of this, and so He is most fittingly represented, in type, by a *sheaf*.

II. The *second* of these offerings was the one spoken of in Ex. 23:19 and 34:26: "The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shalt bring into the house of Jehovah thy God." The command in Ex. 22:29 without doubt applies to this offering: "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits and of thy liquors," or, as the LXX reads, "thou shalt not delay to offer the first-fruits of thy threshing floor and of thy wine press." The reason for the command not to delay in bringing these offerings seems to have been because they belonged to the priests to be used for food (Num. 18:12, 13, Deut. 18:4, Neh. 10:35-37). Pentecost, the time when the first-fruits of the *wheat* harvest were offered (Ex. 34:22) was too far away (seven weeks); and hence the Israel-

ites were enjoined not to delay bringing the first-fruits of everything *as they matured*, in order that the ministering priests and Levites might have them to eat in their season. This command had reference, of course, not only to grains, but also to perishable fruits and vegetables. But the offering prescribed for all such first-fruits was to be made of *grain*. It is described in Lev. 2:14-16. The fresh (i. e., *green*) ears, or *heads* of grain, were parched (roasted) with fire, and then shelled, and the grain was bruised. Oil and frankincense were put upon a portion of it, which was then burned for a sweet savour on the altar. The rest of it belonged to the priests.

In this we have a prophecy of the Pre-Tribulation resurrection and rapture. This is shown:

1st. By the *time when this offering was to be made*. These were "the first of the first-fruits." The barley harvest was a number of weeks earlier than the wheat harvest. There was to be no delay in offering the first-fruits as they matured and were gathered; hence the offering prescribed in Lev. 2:14-16 must have been made between the time when the wave-sheaf was offered, at the beginning of the barley harvest, and Pentecost,\* just seven weeks later, when "the first-fruits of the wheat harvest" were offered.

2d. By the *mode of its preparation*. It was *bruised*, instead of being ground into fine flour, as in the Pentecostal meal offering, thus symbolizing the presentation

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\* Not that all the first-fruits of this class were to be brought in before the day of Pentecost; for that could not have been the case, since many things, like grapes for example, did not mature until a later date. From the nature of the case, it will be seen why there was no specified date for the presentation of this offering, as in the case of the other two.



of the saints to God by Christ, our Priest,—before the days of the Tribulation, with its grinding processes and the furnace heat of its fierce persecutions.

3rd. *By its mode of offering.* This offering was made *without leaven*, and hence was offered up as a sweet savour upon the altar. It therefore typifies the peculiar pleasure and satisfaction with which God receives the saints that are *first* raised and caught up to heaven,—those who are accounted worthy to “attain unto the *out-resurrection* (ἐξανάστασις) from the dead” (Phil. 3:11).

III. The *third* offering of first-fruits was made at Pentecost, “The Feast of Weeks, even the first-fruits of wheat harvest” (Ex. 34:22, Lev. 23:15-17). This offering differed from the one of which we have just spoken in that it was made of *fine flour*, and in its being “*baken with leaven.*” It could not, therefore, be burned on the altar, since nothing containing leaven could “come up for a sweet savour on the altar” (Lev. 2:11, 12). As has been partially explained already, this offering is typical and prophetic of the resurrection and presentation before God of the Mid-Tribulation saints of Rev. 7:9-17.

Thus while Christ is “the first-fruits of them that are asleep,” the Pre-Tribulation saints, represented by the four and twenty Elders, will also be the first-fruits of an early harvest; and the passages just considered, we believe, make it no less clear that in the midst of the Great Tribulation there will be yet another presentation of first-fruits unto God, in the unnumbered hosts of glorified saints mentioned in Chapter 7:9-17,—the first-fruits of the Tribulation.



It is perfectly manifest from the mention of this great multitude of saints gathered "out of every nation and from all tribes and peoples and tongues," that an unprecedented work of grace has been going on in the world during the brief time since the beginning of the Tribulation period. The history of the Christian Church can furnish nothing to compare with it. During these fearful days men and women have been turning to the Lord by thousands and tens of thousands. "When thy judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Is. 26:9). And besides, the disappearance of the living saints from the world by translation, whether witnessed by others, or whether in secret, will have a mighty effect to call those who are left to repentance. The Word of God will still be known and preached. All the means of grace will be continued. The Holy Spirit will still be present to "convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment"; for we cannot accept the teaching of some that the Holy Spirit will have withdrawn from the earth before the Tribulation period sets in. Closely connected with, and growing out of the mistaken belief that the Church will no longer be found on the earth during the Tribulation, is the other error that the Holy Spirit will have been withdrawn from the earth at the same time. In support of this view it is claimed that the "one that restraineth," in 2 Thes. 2:6, 7, is the Holy Spirit, and that He must be taken out of the way, and out of the world, before the manifestation of Antichrist, or "the lawless one." This is, indeed, an exceedingly slender thread from which to suspend a doctrine of such im-

mense importance. No other passage is ever cited in proof of the Spirit's removal from the earth. Surely a doctrine of such vast importance ought to have, at least, one plain statement of Scripture in support of it. The passage in question, however, admits easily of another interpretation.

One clear and definite proof that the Holy Spirit continues, during the Tribulation period, to do His office work on the earth, is found in the phenomenally large accessions to the faith, such as are indicated in 6: 9-11 and 7: 9-14. The 144,000 who are sealed from the tribes of Israel is further proof. They are Christians, Spirit-filled Christian-Jews. This is clear from their description as given in 14: 1-6.

Again the two witnesses of 11: 3-12, which inspiration identifies as the "two anointed ones," or "sons of oil," of Zech. 4: 14, whose testimony and labors during the last half of the Tribulation period are so remarkable, will be men on whom the power of the Holy Spirit will rest to an unusual degree.

Let us remember also that when our Lord told the disciples of the coming of the Paraclete, He said the Father would send Him, "in order that He may be with you *unto the age*," ( εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ); nor is it a mere quibble to say that the period for which the promise was given will not have expired when the Tribulation begins.

Another proof that the Spirit continues to dwell and work on the earth during all this period, and into the next age, is to be found in passages like Is. 32: 15, 44: 3, Ezek. 36: 27, 37: 14, 39: 29 and Joel 2: 28, 29, in which it is shown that the conversion of Israel and

of all the nations, and the transition to the Millennial reign of Christ, will be effected by means of a special and marvellous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was not the complete fulfillment of Joel 2:28, 29. That was the day when "the *first-fruits* of wheat harvest" were offered; but although it was called "the Feast of Harvest," the wheat harvest had then only just begun. The great Harvest-Home, "the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year," was the Feast of Tabernacles, more than four months after Pentecost (Ex. 23:16, Lev. 23:34, 39, 40, and Deut. 16:13). Great and remarkable as were the ingathering and offering of the first-fruits on the day of Pentecost—3,000 souls—it will prove, in comparison, but an earnest, or foretaste, of those larger ingatherings yet to come, when "they shall joy before thee according to the *joy of harvest*, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" (Is. 9:3).

But to return, after this long digression, to the "great multitude" of which the closing portion of Chapter 7 speaks. The picture there given of them, and of their blessed life and service in the immediate presence of God, is so wonderful as to make these few verses one of the most remarkable passages in the Bible. Some have supposed that the difference between this description and that of the four and twenty Elders in Chapter 4, or of the overcomers in Chapters 2 and 3, indicates that they belong to a wholly distinct order among the hosts of the redeemed. There is here no mention of *thrones* and *crowns*. They are seen *standing*. Therefore, it is assumed, they are not *kings* like the other saints. But this is not a com-

plete description of any company of the redeemed. It is only a partial and supplementary picture of the saints, *in general*. No single passage gives a complete picture of them in their heavenly life. The Holy Spirit has left to us the pleasant task of combining all these partial accounts, or sketches, into one complete whole. The same thing is equally true of the many references to Christ in this book. The partial descriptions we have of Him in the Seven Letters, and in other passages, need to be brought together to form in our mind one complete, living, and glorious image of the Lamb—the Bridegroom. So also, all the knowledge of the heavenly state of the “overcomers,” which we gain from the Seven Letters, needs to be added to the many other passages descriptive of the saints and their heavenly joys and activities, in order to form one composite whole, and thus give something like a complete concept of the appearance and heavenly life of the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife. And as to the *royalty* of those who form this great multitude, the Lord has not failed to speak of that, for this same company are among those mentioned in 20:4, where they are seen *sitting on thrones*, and *exercising judgment*.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE events following the opening of the Seventh Seal are not described, nor outlined as such, as in the case of the other Seals. The reason for this, as we have already stated, is because the contents of the Seventh Seal are to be described in detail under the head of the seven Trumpet judgments.

The opening verses of this chapter form a most fitting prelude to the Trumpet judgments. The silence in heaven, spoken of in verse 1, is impressive and ominous. The solemn ceremony at the altar is also full of significance. As prayer is best and most fittingly offered in a time of stillness, so it must have been during the solemn hush of this half hour that the prayers of all the saints went up before God from the golden altar, mingled with the smoke of much incense coming from the censer in the angel's hand.

There are those who hold that the angel standing at the altar, in verse 3, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. So also, He is said to be the "mighty angel," in 10:1. This view seems to us to be unsafe and more than doubtful. Unless these are exceptions, Christ is *never*, in the New Testament, called an *angel*. Throughout this book, whenever He is mentioned, it is in such particular and explicit terms as to leave no doubt who is meant. It is not wise, therefore, to regard these two cases as exceptions. The same considerations apply also in regard to the rider on the white horse in 6:2.

The time is now come when many a prayer of God's saints will receive attention and get its answer. Many of the prayers that are here offered up on the golden altar of incense, had doubtless been given up as unheard and unnoticed by God. But nothing could be farther from the truth. No prayer of faith goes unheeded; for notice, that it is the "prayers of *all* the saints" that are here mentioned as having "much incense" added unto them by divine direction. All through the slow flight of years, they had been heard, accepted, and remembered by God; and in *His* own time they will be answered; for they will be offered up before Him "upon the golden altar," and with "much incense."

In verse 5 we have another instance of the peculiar landmarks, or sign-posts, so frequently met in this book. Before each series of desolating judgments breaks on the world, some divine intimation of it is given by signs which forebode the evil. Here the thunders, voices, lightnings and earthquake are all fittingly ominous of direful events. Similar portents preceded the series of judgments which were introduced by the opening of the Seals (4:5; see also 11:19). And again, in the Seven thunders of 10:3, we shall see that the Seven Bowl, or Vial judgments are preceded by a seven-fold premonition of coming woe:

"His chariots of wrath  
Deep thunder-clouds form,  
And dark is His path  
On the wings of the storm."



It is apparent that all of the Trumpet judgments were so extensive as to affect the whole earth. However grievous and appalling the first four of them are, they are exceeded in severity by the last three, which are called Woes. It will be observed that in the first three of these judgments, the restraint laid upon the four angels in 7:2, 3 has been removed, showing that the sealing of the 144,000 has been completed. Further reference to this company of sealed ones is made in Chapter 9:4, where it is said they are protected by divine command from the scourge of the scorpion-like locusts. It is also possible that they enjoyed a similar immunity when other judgments fell, corresponding to Israel's exemption from some of the plagues of Egypt.

## CHAPTER IX.

ALL that is said in Chapter IX is to be understood most *literally*. The word "Star" (ver. 1) we would not understand symbolically, but as having the meaning which it sometimes has in Scripture, of *prince*, *angel*, or perhaps better still, *archangel*, or *angel-prince* (compare Jude 9 with Dan. 10: 13 and 12: 1), as in Num. 24: 17, Job 38: 7 and Is. 14: 13. The Star here mentioned, we believe to be, not *Satan*, as Alford, Seiss, and others hold, but a *holy* angel. The word "fallen" does not imply that the one to whom the key was given was a *fallen* angel. Its use here is in keeping with the designation of "star," since we should speak of a star, not as *having descended*, but as "*having fallen* from heaven." The meaning of the abyss will be considered in Chapter 20.

This chapter is one of several fields in this book where the unrestrained fancy of the historical interpreter delights to perform its acrobatic feats. Multifarious are the interpretations that have been given of the scorpion-like locust plague of the Fifth Trumpet. Some interpreters see in it the irruption of the northern hordes of barbarians, and their spread over the Roman Empire, beginning in the time of Alaric. Others would identify it with the rise and spread of Islam. Some think the locust-scurge refers to the Arian heresy. Many other guesses, quite as absurd, might be added to these. But there is nothing in the

sacred Word to justify anything else than the most literal interpretation. These locusts are *locusts*, animated, demon-like engines of torture, having scorpion-like stings, with which they have power to inflict fearful torments on men during a period of *five literal months*,—not one hundred and fifty years, as the historical interpreters would have it. These locusts issued from the abyss, or bottomless pit, and went forth obedient to the command of their “King, the Angel of the abyss,” Apollyon, one of the darkest and most terrible of all Satan’s lieutenants. This scourge is indescribably more fearful and painful than has ever been inflicted by barbarian or Moslem; for none of the things done by them were so grievous and terrible in their effect, that it could be said of them “in those days men shall seek death and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die and death fleeth from them.”

The Second Woe, which begins on the sounding of the Sixth Trumpet, is also described most literally in verses 13-21. The historical interpreters, however, claim the prophecy in these verses to have been fulfilled in the Turkish conquests, beginning about the middle of the eleventh century, and ending with the fall of Constantinople, and of the Roman Empire in A. D. 1453. But consider carefully the following words of “The Amen, the faithful and true witness”: “And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand (200,000,000): I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of

brimstone; and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths" (vers. 16-18). How can these words be faithful and true, if they were fulfilled in the Turkish wars? Do we not see the manifest impropriety of applying such remarkable language as we have in these verses to the occurrences of that period? Nay, when, since the world began, has an army so vast—*two hundred million horsemen!*—been sent forth to destroy a third part of the inhabitants of the earth? Man is given to exaggeration, but God is incapable of such a thing.

The time spoken of in verse 15 does not express *duration*, but the exact moment of time, when, in the counsels of God, this woe is to begin. So severe and fatal is this plague that a third of earth's inhabitants are destroyed by it. Notwithstanding all this, the great majority of men will harden their hearts, and abandon themselves to the worship of idols and demons, and to work all kinds of iniquity.

This chapter closes with a vision of the earth still in the hardness of unbelief and rebellion against God. Let us consider, for a moment, the significance of this fact. The world, as a whole, had rejected the "testimony of Jesus" before the Tribulation period had set in. Israel had continued blind and impenitent to the end. When the events of Rev. 4-19 begin to be fulfilled, "the times of the Gentiles" will have reached their end, and the last sands thereof will be running out. The Gentiles, too, are in the same state of un-

belief and obduracy of heart. They, too, have plainly declared that they will not have Christ for their king. The time of judgment, therefore, comes. God sends the seven Seal judgments upon the world. Out of those judgments "a great multitude, which no man could number," are saved, but the race of mankind, *as a whole*, continues on in impenitence and hardness of heart. As a matter of course, the seven Trumpet judgments then follow with increasing severity. We say "as a matter of course"; for this we believe is a *legitimate inference* to be drawn from the four times repeated warning of God, in Lev. 26 (vers. 18, 21, 24, 28): "And if by these things ye will not be reformed unto me, but will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary unto you, and I will smite you, even I, seven times\* for your sins." Those warnings had special reference to Israel's conduct in the Pre-Messianic times. But the implication in Deut. 18:18, 19, is that refusal to hearken to the Greater Prophet will be followed by a corresponding series of heavier judgments of ever-increasing severity. As the plagues of Egypt left Pharaoh and his people with added hardness of heart, so we see in 9:20, 21, the Trumpet judgments will leave the inhabitants of the earth in the lowest depths of unbelief and wickedness. Therefore God, true to His Word, will have yet seven other and more terrible judgments to pour out upon them in His wrath.

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\* Advocates of the "Year-day theory" have sometimes attempted to apply that theory to these passages in Lev. 26; but the word "times" in this chapter is peculiar to the English tradition, not being found once in the Hebrew text of this passage. "Times" here is not a *time-word*, but is used *adverbially*, as in "three times three are nine."

## CHAPTER X.

THE Sixth Trumpet has sounded. The Second Woe is now past, although the announcement of this fact is deferred until 11:14, the reason for which, we trust, will be made clear as we proceed. At this point, another resurrection and rapture of the saints must be assumed as taking place. The proofs of it are found in Chapter 14:14-16, the harvest there mentioned coinciding exactly in time. It is the gathering of the wheat into the heavenly garner. The multitude raised, and translated, at this time, are seen in 15:2-4 as the company of those that had "come off victorious from the beast and from his image, and from the number of his name." All this may awaken surprise, inasmuch as there has not yet, up to this point, been any direct and explicit mention of the Beast and his doings.

The mention of the rainbow upon the angel's head, in verse 1, may perhaps be regarded as additional proof of this second Mid-Tribulation rapture. For, as the rainbow is seen in an outburst of sunshine after the storm has passed, so its mention here would seem to indicate that after the fierce storm of persecution and tribulation under the reign of the Antichrist, God, in His mercy and grace, crowns with deliverance, rest, and glory those who have confessed His Son, during those days of trial, in the furnace heated seven times hot.



It might have been expected that the inspired seer would have gone on in Chapter X to narrate, in prophetic vision, the things that are to follow, when the Seventh Trumpet shall sound. That, however, is not the order. The Holy Spirit, we believe, had a different plan in revealing "the things which shall come to pass after these things." The continuity of the narrative is interrupted for a time. This chapter, therefore, has given much perplexity to expositors. But by careful attention to the sign-posts, or way-marks, which the Spirit has given, we believe we shall find the meaning simple and clear. Verses 4 and 11 furnish key-words to a good understanding of this chapter, and of the proper chronological setting of the chapters which follow. John is bidden in verse 4 to "*seal up*" and "*not to write*" the things uttered by the seven thunders. And also in verse 11 it is said to him "*thou must prophesy again.*" As thunder is the herald of approaching storm, the utterances of the seven thunders undoubtedly speak of the judgments to follow the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, and intimate what those judgments are. There is much significance in their number—seven, the number of completeness, and of dispensational fulness. They not only portend the seven-fold severity of the plagues about to come, but also signify that they are also the *final* judgments of the Tribulation period, "in which is *finished* the wrath of God" (15:1). As the Seventh Seal contained the new series of Trumpet judgments, so the contents of the Seventh Trumpet are the seven last plagues—the Bowl, or Vial judgments of Chapters 16-19. When John was about to record the utterances of the seven thun-

ders which he had heard, he was bidden by a voice from heaven not to do so. The reason why is given in verse 11: "Thou must prophesy again." The events of which the seven thunders spoke form the prophetic burden of Chapters 15-19. According to the divine wisdom, these events will be more suitably described later on, and in connection with what is to be narrated in Chapters 12-14, which belong to the same period as that which we have already covered. Many things, of which there has yet been no mention, have happened during the period already traversed in Chapters 6-9. They are of the greatest importance and must be told; for God has promised to reveal them. Except the brief reference in 6:2, not one word has yet been spoken concerning the Antichrist and His doings. And yet, here we are, at a point of time when the career of the Antichrist is almost at an end; for the time to be covered by the Seventh Trumpet, viz., while the Seven Bowl, or Vial plagues are being poured out, must be exceedingly short. We know this to be the case from the solemn declaration of the angel, in verse 6, "that there shall be delay no longer," and also from the words "blessed \* \* \* \* \* from henceforth" in 14:13, which we understand to have been spoken at the same time. See *in loco*.

This is what we understand by the *palin-prophecy* or "prophesying again" of verse 11. And this, too, is the meaning of the "little Book" which was handed to the Apostle for him to "take it and eat it up" (ver. 9). The contents of this little book are given in the section beginning with 11:19 and ending with the close of Chapter 19. This new prophecy speaks

of grace, deliverance, victory, the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the triumph of Christ over all His enemies. It was therefore "sweet as honey" to the taste of the prophet John, but as it also told of the reign of the Antichrist, of unprecedented tribulations to God's people, and of most appalling judgments and awful plagues to the rest of mankind, it was a message that brought bitterness to his soul. Are not these explanations further confirmed in verse 7, in which it is declared that "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound,\* then is finished the mystery of God"? All will then be made open and clear. The utterances of the seven thunders will *then* be made known, not indeed, as the utterances of the *seven thunders*, but in their meaning as it is revealed in the ongoings of judgment. The words "then is finished the mystery of God" should be compared with the words in 15:1: "in them is finished the wrath of God." Both refer to the same time, the one looking more to the complete uncovering of God's purposes in judgment, the other calling attention to the fact that they are the fullest and final manifestation of His wrath upon "the children of this age." "Thou must prophesy again." In that other prophecy has now been revealed to us the contents of the black cloud of judgment which sent forth its ominous and terrifying thunders. The torrents of divine indignation, the lightnings of God's wrath, the tempest of destructive

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\* Not, "is about to sound" (R. V.), nor "when he shall begin to sound" (A. V.); for μέλλω with the infinitive, often signifies "that which will come to pass by *fixed necessity*, or *divine appointment*." See Matt. 11:14, 16:27, and Rev. 3:10. See also Thayer's *Lexicon of the New Testament*, under μέλλω, 2, C.

and overwhelming fury against all workers of iniquity, immediately preceding and accompanying the "revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven," have been made known. There is no longer any mystery to us. We have it all explained in Chapters 16-19, so long before the actual event, that there should be no ignorance, nor surprise on our part, nor lack of preparation for the coming storm. And it was with the express desire and will that we should escape all these things that shall come to pass (Luke 21:36, Rev. 3:10), that this Book of Revelation has been given to men.

## CHAPTER XI.

IN Chapter 11 we have another passage which has given much perplexity to expositors. The first 13 verses, we believe, are *not parenthetical*; nor do they belong specially to the time of the Sixth Trumpet judgment,—the Second Woe. The Second Woe, or Sixth Trumpet period, came to an end at 9:21. Verses 1-13 contain another survey, from a different point of view, of the period which begins at 6:1 and closes at 9:21. It is given for the purpose of supplying details in the history of that period which could not be given in the preceding chapters without interrupting the continuity of that narrative. In these thirteen verses much light is let in upon the subject of Israel and Jerusalem during this period. It assumes that the Hebrews will have returned to Palestine in great numbers before the time indicated in the opening verses.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that “the temple of God,” mentioned in verse 1, is not the Christian Church, but the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, which, we know from the Old Testament prophecies, is to be rebuilt before the Second Advent of our Lord. Verse 1 assumes that this temple will already have been built, its altar restored, and its worship and system of ordinances will have been re-established, before the great persecution of Israel under the Antichrist begins. This restoration will be effected under the direction of Elijah the prophet. We know this from

Mal. 4:5, 6, and Matt. 17:11. By Elijah we understand the real, *literal* Elijah—"Elijah the Tishbite," as the Septuagint reads in Mal. 4:5. There is, indeed, a sense—a typical, or figurative sense—in which John the Baptist was a fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the coming of Elijah. "He shall go before His face in the Spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). "If ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah who is to come" (Matt. 11:14). "But I say unto you that Elijah is come already" (Matt. 17:12).

But it is also plain that John the Baptist's coming did not exhaust the full meaning of the prophecy in Mal. 4:5, 6. The great fulfillment must be regarded as yet in the future, for four reasons:

First, the prophecy itself requires it: "Behold I will send you *Elijah* the prophet, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah."

Second, "Elijah indeed cometh and shall restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). This was spoken *after the death of John*.

Third, John's own estimate of himself requires another coming of Elijah. "And they asked him, 'What then? Art thou Elijah?' and he said '*I am not*'" (Jno. 1:21).

Fourth, John was a *Forerunner*, but not a *Restorer*. His work did not result in a restoration, as is apparent to all who are familiar with the story of the Gospels.

The restoration of which our Lord and the prophet Malachi spoke will be already an accomplished fact, at the time prophesied in the opening verses of this chapter. Jerusalem is here called "the holy city"



(ver. 2), which, together with the direction given to John, in verse 1, indicates that Israel will now have been taken up again by Jehovah, and that "the times of the Gentiles" will now be running out to the very end. For from Daniel 9:24-26, we know that there is yet a "week," or *heptad*, of seven years, which must intervene between the time when Israel's former relationship to Jehovah, as His peculiar people, is resumed, and the coming of the Anointed one (Messiah), "to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy." The sixty-ninth "seven," or *heptad*, came to an end at the date of Our Lord's crucifixion (Dan. 9:26). The Seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy has not yet (1905) begun. It will end, according to Dan. 9:24, when our Lord returns in righteousness, and with blessing and prosperity for Israel. Its beginning, we believe, will be when the Antichrist ("the prince that shall come"), signs the treaty or covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:26, 27), and Israel again recovers its status *as a nation*. During the first three and a half years of the time named in the treaty, Israel will enjoy peace and worldly prosperity. During this period, we believe, the city of Jerusalem will be enlarged and beautified, the temple rebuilt, and the ancient ordinances and worship restored. But "in the midst of the week," the great Prince, or Emperor, will break his covenant with Israel, and during the remaining half of the heptad (three and a half years) will carry on such a persecution of Israel as is unparalleled in the history of the

race. With all the malignity and fierceness with which Satan can inspire him, he "will wear out the saints of the Most High (this refers also to Christians); and shall think to change the times and the law, and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time" (Dan. 7: 25). Many have understood by these "saints of the most high" *Jews only*. *Daniel* may have had the Jews specially in mind, but God was speaking also of saints from among the *Gentiles*, as is clearly seen from Rev. 7: 9 and 13: 7, 8.

This, we understand, is the period mentioned in Rev. 13: 5, during which the "wild-beast" will have power to *do*, or work, as described in the verses following. It is the period of 42 months during which Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot (ver. 2). And this, we believe to be the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30: 7). But it does not cover the entire period when those who "hold the testimony of Jesus" are under persecution. The Tribulation, as we understand, will cover a period of *seven years*, during the *first half* of which the Hebrews will be exempt from persecution by the Beast, though not from the judgments of God. It is possible, however, that Hebrews outside of Palestine will not be regarded as being a party to the treaty which is made with the Prince, the Beast. Large numbers of Israelites, we know, will not return to that land until after the end of the week. See Is. 11: 11, 12, 51: 11, 66: 20, Jer. 30: 10, Ezek. 34: 11-15, and other passages. Thus the seventieth, or remaining, week of Daniel 9 is to be divided into quite distinct halves. The first half, or three and a half years, we believe to be the time spoken of in Rev. 12:

6, 14. The 1260 days there mentioned are *days*, not years. They are declared by the inspired writer to be the equivalent of "a time, and times, and half a time." It is apparent from a comparison of Daniel 9 with Daniel 7: 25, that a "time" is a *year*, and that "seven times" make a *heptad*, or prophetic "week" of seven years. And as the 69 weeks, or heptads of Daniel 9 have been proved by an appeal to chronology to have covered exactly, *to a day*, a period of 69 prophetic years of 360 days each, it is a very serious error to attempt to correct the inspired Word and declare that "the 1260 days" are not days, but *years*. Such taking of liberty with the Word as this, has resulted, as might have been expected, in a sealing up again of this book, concerning which it has been commanded "seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book." It has covered with a thick, heavy veil of fantastic and impossible interpretations this book, which, in itself, is a *Revelation*. And now, for 1500 years, it would seem that the words of prophecy had again been fulfilled: "For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath He covered. And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, 'Read this, I pray thee'; and he saith, 'I cannot, for it is sealed': and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, 'Read this, I pray thee', and he saith, 'I am not learned'" (Is. 29: 10-12).

The second half of this seventieth week of Daniel 9 is the time referred to in Rev. 11: 2, 13: 5, Dan. 7: 25

and 12:6, 7. The 1260 days during which the two witnesses shall prophesy (11:3), we believe, coincide with the same period,—not, perhaps, exactly *to a day*, but *in general*; for these two witnesses are put to death before the end of the career of the “wild-beast,” or Antichrist,—just how long before, there is nothing to indicate. But that the time of their testimony coincides, in general, with the 42 months of verse 2 seems to be indicated by the fact that they are “clothed in sack-cloth” during the time of their witnessing. Sack-cloth implies a time of great distress. Many, however, make the time of the two witnesses to coincide with the *first* half of the seventieth week. This we believe to be a mistake, for the following reasons:

1st. They prophesied in sack-cloth.

2nd. They encountered great opposition and many enemies, as the whole account plainly shows. That does not accord with the idea that their labors fell in a time of exemption from persecution, such as we understand the first half of the “week” to be. They enjoyed the special protection of God “during the days of their prophecy” (vers. 5 and 6), so that the Beast could not overcome and kill them until “they had finished their testimony.” It is not necessary, therefore, to understand that they were put to death directly after the breaking of the treaty, “in the midst of the week.”

3rd. The time of their being taken up into heaven seems to be indicated with reasonable certainty, as being at the end of the Second Woe—the Sixth Trumpet judgment. Note the words “in that hour” (ver. 13).

4th. The account of these two witnesses having

been introduced after the sounding of the *Sixth* Trumpet, it would be strange, indeed, if their work had come to an end before the time of the *First* Trumpet.

Who the two witnesses are, we are not informed, except that they are the fulfillment, *par excellence*, of Zech. 4: 3, 11, 14. They are "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." Joshua and Zerubbabel were the ones to whom the prophecy of Zechariah had nearest reference; but the prophecy had a wider scope than that. Joshua and Zerubbabel were the types of the two witnesses mentioned in this place. Here is an instance where the Law of Double Reference needs to be applied. Double Reference may be seen in passages in which a single prophecy refers to two distinct persons, or events, the first one of which may be considered as a type of the second, which is, more often, the *principal* reference. Passages in which this law is seen are not infrequent in Scripture. We have already met one such prophecy in this chapter. The prophecy in Mal. 4: 5, 6, refers both to John the Baptist, the Forerunner of the First Advent, and to Elijah, the Restorer and Forerunner, who returns before the Second Coming of the Lord. Another illustration is found in Matt. 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, where, in one prophecy, both the destruction of Jerusalem and the tribulation connected with it, and the time when the Antichrist and his armies shall invest that city at the end of the age, and the accompanying tribulations, are set forth in the same passage. Again, Antiochus Epiphanes and the Antichrist are both seen, according to this same law, in Dan. 8: 9-12, 23-26.

As Joshua and Zerubbabel were the two under whose ministry the temple was rebuilt on the return from the Babylonian captivity, so, it would seem, these two witnesses are God's representatives under whom the temple is rebuilt, and the worship and ordinances are to be restored. This, in the view of many, seems to indicate that one of these two witnesses is none else than the prophet Elijah himself—the prophet of the Restoration. But in the absence of positive teaching in the Word itself, we may not speak with assurance. Who the other witness will be is involved in yet more uncertainty, and we frankly say we do not know and have no theory. It is strenuously held by some that it is Moses. In the early Church, it was held, and is also held by many to-day, that this witness will be Enoch. Inasmuch as Enoch and Elijah had never died, and as they are the only two of all the sons of men, now in glory, of which this can be said, this fact is considered as best answering the descriptive clause, “which stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” \*

This account of the work of the two witnesses having been given, the declaration is made that the Second Woe is past and the Third Woe is about to come. This announcement might have been made at the end of Chapter 9, where, in the order of time, it properly belongs; but coming where it does, at verse 14 of this chapter, the time of their witnessing is made very clear in its relation to the events of the preceding chapters, and makes the end of their course to fall

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\* For a most interesting discussion of this subject, see *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, by Sciss. Lecture 23.



after the Sixth Trumpet has sounded and before the sounding of the Seventh.

Neither the Third Woe nor any of the events which take place on the earth during the time of it, are described in connection with the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet. A similar fact was noticed and commented on when the Seventh Seal was opened. As the events belonging to the Seventh Seal have been given as the Trumpet judgments, so the occurrences which properly belong to the Seventh Trumpet are left to be described farther on, as the "seven last Plagues," or the Seven Bowl judgments. What is now narrated in the closing verses of this chapter is the rejoicing among the heavenly hosts after the last judgment of the seven final plagues had been executed upon the enemies of Christ. The rejoicing shout of verse 15 is not raised until all the events between this verse and Chapter 20:3 have taken place. The Millennial reign of Christ is here seen as having already begun. The Lord Jesus Christ is now in actual possession of the Kingdom of the world.

Attention is called to the corrected rendering of verse 15 in the Revised, "the kingdom of the world,"—not kingdoms, but the world, in its entirety, *as a kingdom*—the sovereignty of which has long been in the possession of Satan (Luke 4:5, 6). Our Lord Jesus spoke of the devil as "prince of this world." Of this world-kingdom John wrote, "the whole world lieth in the Evil one" (1 John 5:19). But at the time of the great shout in verse 15, Satan will have been stripped of this kingdom and authority, and

shorn of all his power, and will be chained and shut up in the Abyss.

Notice also, particularly, that verse 18 contains a recapitulation, as it were, of all the events recorded in Chapter 19. If this is clearly apprehended, the eight following chapters will present no chronological difficulty.

We have now reached, in verse 18, the end of Section 1 of Part I. With verse 19 the inspired apostle and prophet, John, begins a new section. This is the *new* or "*palin-prophecy*", which he was commanded in Chapter 10 to make. This new prophecy goes back again and starts from the very beginning of the time already covered by Chapters 4-11: 18. In this we have another application of the *Law of Recurrence*, so often observed in the Bible, according to which the Holy Spirit directs the inspired writers, sometimes, to return, for the purpose of adding details, or to trace other events belonging to the same period, which could not be given with all the rest in one continuous narrative. This is not peculiar to the sacred historian. Secular history often does the same thing. A single period is gone over in different chapters; one chapter confining itself to the political events of the time, while another traces the social or industrial life of the country, and a third describes the literary or religious history of the people during the same years. When God chooses four Evangelists to write the story of the life of our Lord from four different standpoints, each one giving details not found in the others, no misunderstanding results; but when the Holy Spirit employs *one* prophetic writer to cover the same

period twice, as in these two sections of the Book of Revelation, this principle of the Law of Recurrence is not so easily noticed. In a piece of music the sign *Da Capo*, "from the beginning," is understood as a sign to return and start again from the beginning. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit has placed the sign *Da Capo* at this point, to indicate that we are now to go back to the beginning of Part I. Failure to understand this has led to much confusion in regard to the time of the events predicted in Section 2 (11:19-20:3). It has been taken for granted that as Chapter 12 follows Chapter 11, in the order of *chapters*, so the *events* foretold in Chapter 12 must occur after those in Chapter 11 have been fulfilled. Hence it is not surprising that most readers of the book, and alas! many interpreters likewise, become involved in a hopeless chronological tangle.

Some interpreters try to find a way out of the difficulty by regarding certain chapters as *parentheses*, or *episodes*, which have been inserted by the inspired writer without regard to chronological sequence. This, however, leaves the difficulty still unsolved.

A third method of interpretation is employed by those who consider certain passages as "*Prefaces of blessing*," as they are called, or the mention of "*the closing event of blessing first*"; or, to state it in other words, these Prefaces of blessing, it is held, stand at the beginning of a passage, to show, by way of prophetic anticipation and promise, the blessings which are to *follow* the judgments to be described in that passage. Examples of these "Prefaces of blessing" are to be found in the rejoicings and praises of Chap-

ters 4 and 5; the whole of Chapters 7 and 10, 14: 1-5 and 15: 2-4.

Is this theory tenable? Of Chapters 4 and 5 a well known writer \* remarks that while "those chapters preface and introduce the Revelation, yet the glories symbolized in them and the anticipative millennial song of the fifth Chapter will not be realized until all the woes of which the succeeding chapters treat shall have passed forever." This author explains the twenty-four Elders as representing the Church of the first-born. Why then should the Elders be mentioned here, if their presence and participation in the rejoicings of heaven are not "realized until all the woes of which the succeeding chapters treat shall have passed forever"? Would the Spirit of Truth represent them as being present in those introductory ceremonies, if they are not to taste of the glories and rejoicings of heaven till the last woe shall have passed? The rejoicing and songs of Chapters 4 and 5 are *not in celebration of Christ's triumph* over His enemies, *but in view of His worthiness to open the Seals and to receive the Kingdom and power that are about to become His* (11: 15). These "Prefaces of blessing," it is held, are especially meant to encourage and sustain the saints during the tribulations mentioned in the passages, at the head of which these prefaces of blessing stand. But would a promise of future blessing be more potent as an encouragement to steadfastness, than a vision of reward and blessedness already entered upon would be? All such attempts to solve the chronological

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\* B. W. Newton, "Thoughts on the Apocalypse," p. 117.

problems of the book are cumbersome, and instead of solving difficulties only increase them.

There is an easier and more satisfactory solution than any of these. The Holy Spirit Himself has supplied numerous signs or indications by means of which the solution is made exceedingly simple. Strictly speaking, there is nothing parenthetical in the entire book. Everything moves along in a regular and natural order. We do not mean that the events narrated in one chapter must follow, in the order of time, all that has been given in the preceding chapters. For example, Chapter 11:1-13 is not a parenthesis, but a supplying of other details of history in the period already covered. In these thirteen verses, the inspired seer goes back to give an account of what will occur *in Jerusalem* during the time covered by the events described in Chapters 6-9. And so also we do not consider Chapters 17 and 18, strictly speaking, to be a parenthesis. They are explanatory of two previous remarks, about Babylon the Great. They are related to what goes before, precisely as Matt. 13:18-23 and 36-43 are related to the passages preceding; that is, they are *explanatory*, not *parenthetical*.

Part I.           Section 2.           (Chapters 11:19-20:3).

At Chapter 11:19, therefore, we begin an entirely new section of the book. Part I is divided into two halves, or sections, between verses 18 and 19. Each half, or Section *covers the same period*—THE WHOLE TRIBULATION PERIOD. That Section 1 properly ends at 11:18 is shown in 11:15-18, which depicts the rejoicing in heaven over the final

triumph of Christ over His enemies, and the beginning of His reign as the supreme and only sovereign in the earth. Amid the rejoicings of the heavenly hosts, the great shout goes up that Christ is now in possession of the Kingdom of the world, and that God's servants, the prophets and saints, have received their reward, while judgment has been meted out to His enemies. That verse 19 begins a new section, and is a prelude to it, is seen from the verse itself: "The temple of God that is in heaven" was opened and "the ark of His covenant" was seen in it. "The ark of His covenant is the symbol of God's faithfulness in bestowing grace on His people and inflicting vengeance on their enemies" (Alford). It was from the temple or tabernacle on earth that *grace* was ministered to His people in former times. It was also from the ark, or from within the sanctuary, that *judgment* went forth (Lev. 10:2, Num. 16:35, 45-47, I Sam. V, 6:19, II Sam. 6:6, 7, II Chron. 26:19). So the great judgments, at the end of this present age, are to be sent forth from this "temple that is in heaven" (see 14:15, 17, 15:5-8, 16:1, 17). The lightnings, voices, thunders, earthquake, and hail are premonitory signs of the coming storm; and indicate that verse 19 is the beginning of a new section. Verse 19 should have been the first verse of Chapter 12 rather than the last verse of Chapter 11.



## CHAPTER XII.

IN the whole inspired Word no passage is more remarkable than the chapter we have now reached. As the first verse of John's Gospel begins at a point much more remote in the past than that from which the first words of Genesis start, so in the first verse of this chapter we are carried back to a point of time prior to that with which Chapter 4 opens. Section 1 begins with a vision in which the saints are seen in glory, while verses 1-5 give a symbolic account of their resurrection and rapture.

While we hold tenaciously to the rule of interpreting literally the words of this book, whenever possible, there are words and passages which the Holy Spirit has clearly signified are to be understood with a symbolic meaning. Such, for example, is the name given to Jerusalem in 11:8: "which *spiritually* is called Sodom and Egypt." Its name was not Sodom and Egypt, *literally*, but "*spiritually*", or *figuratively*. The real name of the city is understood from the following clause, "where also their Lord was crucified." So also the other great city, Babylon, is not the *literal* Babylon; for it is spoken of as a "mystery." The mystery is so fully explained in Chapter 17 that we are under the necessity of giving the name a symbolic meaning wherever it occurs in this book. Again in 15:2 the sea which John saw was not a *literal*

"glassy sea mingled with fire," but was only such *in appearance*, or, "*as it were*, a glassy sea." But beyond such indications we need to exercise great caution in accepting anything but a literal interpretation wherever that is possible. Failure to observe this rule has led to very wrong methods of interpretation much in vogue for many centuries, and which prevail so generally to the present day.

The symbolic element predominates in Chapter 12. The woman and the dragon are spoken of in verses 1, 3, as *signs* (R. V.). This, rather than "wonder" (A. V.) is the true meaning of the word σημεῖον. Since, then, the woman and the dragon are signs, or symbols, it is manifest that the greater part of the chapter must be interpreted accordingly, and that the "Man-Child," and the "wilderness" are also *figurative* expressions.

The woman of which this chapter speaks is not *Israel*, as some hold. We believe her to be the Church *on earth*,\*—the Visible Church, the Church *in its comprehensive character*, as including both Old and New Testament believers, real and nominal. This view is supported by many passages in the Word of God, beginning with Gen. 3:15,—the great prophecy concerning "the woman and her seed." She is "clothed with the Sun,"—thus carrying out the idea that the people of God are "the sons of the light" (Luke 16:8), and "sons of the day" (I Thes. 5:5). She also has "the moon under her feet." The moon is the queen of the night, and here stands for the kingdom and works of darkness over which the people of God have

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\*See page 219.

gained the ascendancy. And "upon her head a crown of twelve stars,"—another sure indication that this woman is a symbol of the Church—the Church of both Old and New Testament dispensations: "the Israel of God," the symbolical number of which has ever been twelve. Nor is this inconsistent with what was said at 4:4 concerning the twenty-four Elders. They were the representatives of the seed of the woman in two dispensations. May we not have a further proof of this in the last verse of this chapter, in which her seed is described as those "that keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus"? These two clauses, we believe, are not synonymous. They describe two classes of people. Christians are designated in the last clause as those who "hold the testimony of Jesus"; the other clause, "that keep the commandments of God," refers specially, we think, to Israelites,—non-Christian Jews. They do not "hold the testimony of Jesus," but "keep the commandments of God" in the Old Testament. Is not Israel still God's people, despite their unbelief? "Did God cast off His people"? asks the Apostle. To which he immediately replies, "God did not cast off His people that He foreknew" (Rom. 11:1, 2).

There should be no doubt who the "great red dragon" is, after the full and detailed explanation in which he is designated "the old Serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole earth" (ver. 9). But notwithstanding this most clear and divinely inspired identification, some modern interpreters regard the dragon as Pagan Rome! Let it be observed that although the first and last parts of this

chapter are to be interpreted symbolically, the case is wholly different with verses 7-12. They are to be taken in their literal and obvious sense.

The dragon, then, is the Devil, or Satan, the "prince of this world," "the deceiver of the whole earth," "the accuser of our brethren." The *color* of the dragon is *red*. This is significant as to the true character of Satan. Red is suggestive of blood; and it is characteristic of the reign of the Devil that it has been bloody and murderous throughout. Our Lord said of him, "He was a murderer from the beginning" (Jno. 8: 44). Cain, who was the first in the line of the seed of the serpent (1 Jno. 3: 12), was also a murderer. Blood and violence have marked his reign in the earth from that day to the present. It was by his instigation that the Son of God was put to death. It was a special creation of his own that was seen "drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (17: 6). The dragon is further described as "having seven heads and ten horns." As this subject will be discussed more at length in connection with 13: 1 and 17: 3, we do not enlarge upon it here.

The reference to the tail drawing "the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth," is, we believe, a statement in figurative language concerning the great host of the angels whom Satan persuaded to join himself in the time of his rebellion against God in the beginning. As the Woman symbolizes the visible, or nominal Church, the Man-Child, of which she is delivered, is the *invisible*, or *real* Church—"the body of Christ"—those living in union

with Him, in whom "Christ has been formed" (Gal. 4: 19).

In verse 5 we have a description of the resurrection and rapture of the saints. This is the time and event when the great separation takes place,—the wheat from the straw and chaff and also from the tares,—the new spiritual man from the old carnal nature, and at the same time the real believers from those who are so only in name. The believing dead will be raised, the living saints will be changed, and both together will be caught up to God's throne (3:21). From I Thes. 4: 17 we know that they will meet Christ "in the air"; and thus, He and they together, Head and Body, will ascend "unto God and unto His throne," and together will have "authority over the nations," and will rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2: 26, 27). See also Luke 12: 32, Dan. 7: 25, Rev. 5: 10. In the light of these references, and comparing them with verse 5, how can there be any question who is meant by the Man-Child?

There are however many who, like Alford, regard *Christ* as the Man-Child. Verse 5 they understand to be speaking of His historic birth and of His ascension to the Father.

But there are several most weighty objections to such an interpretation:

1. These two events, the birth and catching up, are among "the things which shall come to pass *after these things*,"—that is to say, they are (to-day) still future.

2. The Man-Child cannot be Christ, because it is apparent from the account that Satan was foiled in

his purpose to devour it, by the instantaneousness of the two events.

3. For another reason it could not be Christ, because there is no reason to believe that Satan pursued our Lord to heaven, when He ascended, in order to claim Him for his own. He had nothing whatever on which to base such a claim, as he has in our case. For Christ has said of him, "*the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me*" (Jno. 14:30).

4. Again, the Man-Child cannot be Christ, because immediately following its catching up, "there was war in heaven," the result of which was the expulsion of Satan and his angels from the heavens. This event had not yet taken place when Paul wrote, in Eph. 6:12, about "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places," and there is no ground for supposing that it has taken place since.

Satan stands ready to devour the Man-Child as soon as he is born. Through all the centuries since the Fall in Eden, it has been his expectation, or purpose, like Pharaoh, to destroy the Man-Child (Ex. 1:16), and to prevent its being "caught up unto God and unto His throne." Is not this the explanation of his contention with Michael, the Archangel, about the body of Moses (Jude 9)? It seems that he even dared to lay claim to the body of that great prophet and man of God, and to dispute the execution of God's will by Michael, the mighty angel-prince. Can there be any surprise, therefore, that the "accuser of our brethren, that accuseth them before our God day and night" (ver. 10), should seek to prevent the saints from being



caught up to heaven, in order that he might destroy them both soul and body in hell?

Here again Satan sustains a most humiliating defeat. He can no more prevent the ascension to heaven of the resurrected and living saints than he could prevent that of Christ, the Lord of Glory. But although he is balked in this attempt, he does not give them up; for have not all been under sin? Were they not all, at one time, his bond-servants, his slaves? (Jno. 8:34). Were they not once, all of them, subjects of his kingdom, "the power of darkness"? (Col. 1:13, Acts 26:18). Most certainly. And so, infuriated and rendered desperate by his loss, although the hazard is so great, like Shimei of old, whose servants had escaped from him (I Kings 2:40),) and like Pharaoh, whose bondmen were leaving Egypt, he follows them to his own undoing. For, gathering all his hosts together, he pursues them to heaven, in order to demand their surrender, or, if need be, to wrest them by force from the hand of God. But he meets with resistance. The Father and the Son both have them safe in their keeping, and "no one is able to snatch them out of their hand" (Jno. 10:28, 29). War in heaven is the result. Verses 7-12 are not symbolical in language. Their meaning is precisely what it seems to be. "There was war in heaven." That the immediate cause of this war was Satan's attempt to recover the saints, seems to be clear from verse 11: "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the Word of their testimony." Michael and his angels withstood the attack of Satan and his angels and overcame them. Satan and his angels are now forever driven

out from the heavenly places ; for it is written, "neither was their place found any more in heaven" (ver. 8).

But although the heavens are forever rid of him, not so is it with the earth ; for he is "cast down to the earth," which will now be the only scene of his activity during the short time that remains to him.

Would that some Milton with perfervid imagination might worthily picture in glowing words the triumph and rejoicings of the angelic armies in heaven and of the innumerable hosts of the glorified saints, when they celebrate the victory here foretold by the gracious promise and revelation of our God.

As seen in this prophetic vision of the inspired seer, the saints are already standing "before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy" (Jude 24). And well may their joy be "exceeding"; for Satan has been bruised under their feet (Rom. 16: 20), and will never again be permitted to utter a single word of accusation against one of them. Never again can he gain access to the place where such accusation can be made. Hitherto, however, (that is, up to the time of the resurrection and rapture of the saints), he has had access, and has made his accusations without ceasing. We read of his accusations against Job (Job 1 and 2) ; also how he stood before the Angel of Jehovah, to be the adversary of Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3: 1) ; and in verse 10, that he accuseth the brethren before our God day and night ; but before the first judgment of the Tribulation falls upon the earth, that access and that power to accuse the saints will be lost to him forever. "They overcame him." The full power "of the blood of the Lamb," and of "the word of

their testimony", is now demonstrated. No judgment seat nor dread tribunal is here spoken of. They were never brought to trial. It had been written of such they "shall not come into judgment" (Jno.. 5:24). Their salvation, as seen in the vision, is not incomplete, but full and consummated.

While the heavens are rejoicing in their full deliverance from "the hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6: 12, R. V.), not so is it on the earth. Unprecedented and unimagined evils are in store for those who live on the earth and on the sea. For Satan, mortified and maddened because of what he has lost, is filled with wrath, and in the short time that he knows is left to him, he will mete out to its inhabitants the full measure of his fury (ver. 12).

From whatever standpoint we view it, this chapter is a most remarkable passage. Its chronological setting is not less noteworthy than its contents. The things foretold in verses 1-12 are prior in time to what is narrated in Chapters 4 and 5. They are placed at this point to show just where in the great program of events the resurrection and rapture of I Thes. 4: 16, 17 will occur. The close connection between that glorious event and the beginning of the Tribulation period is also made equally clear. For Satan's casting down to the earth and the great wrath with which he assembles his routed and dejected hosts, are, in one sense, the occasion and starting point of the Great Tribulation. In saying this, we do not lose sight of the fact that the judgments to fall on the earth during that period, are all of *God's* sending.

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast down

to the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the Man-Child." What better proof could there be that the Church is found on the earth during the Tribulation? But, was not the Church, as some believe, "caught up unto God and unto His throne"? Not exactly that. It was not the *Church*—not the *Woman*, but the Man-Child, the *saints*—that were caught up—the five *wise* virgins, who were ready, when the midnight cry came, "Behold the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet Him"—*they* were caught up. But those who were not watching,—the five *foolish* virgins, the merely nominal followers of Christ, were left. Well may we believe that when the great truth dawns upon such in the day of which the parable speaks, many will seek the forgiveness and grace of "the God of all grace." That they will be accepted by Him, who can doubt? And thus, many, by God's all-enabling grace, will be strengthened to make a good confession, and will afterward be found among those of whom it is written, "These are they that come out of the great Tribulation and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14). Is not all this necessitated by what is said of the five foolish virgins? They were not ready when the Bridegroom came, and so went away to obtain a supply of oil. The parable implies that they were successful in getting the oil; but though they returned with full and brightly burning lamps, they were then too late to enter with the others. By their failure to "watch at every season," they had not "prevailed to escape" the sufferings of the Tribulation period (Lk. 21:34-36). And as the inspired parable implies

that they obtained the oil for which they went in search, so it also affords silent but effective testimony to the continued presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the world after the rapture of the Pre-Tribulation saints. For here, as elsewhere in Scripture, the "oil" is typical of the Holy Spirit.

But although persecution, fierce and determined, breaks upon the Woman—the remaining Church, God interposes in her behalf for a season (three and a half years), to mitigate its fierceness and intensity. This we believe to be the meaning of verses 6 and 14. The description is symbolical and needs therefore to be interpreted accordingly. The "wilderness" speaks of severe trials and desolating experiences; but throughout this season, she is "nourished," that is *protected and sustained by divine power*, in order that the full force of Satan's wrath may not fall upon her, as it will after this period of three and a half years shall have expired. Let us not be misunderstood. It will be a time of great Tribulation. There is no doubt of that. But the persecutions and sufferings of this period will be mild in comparison with those of the last half of the Tribulation week. In verses 6 and 14 there are two phrases which must be regarded as synonymous, and which speak of the same period of time. The 1260 days and the "time, and times, and half a time," mean exactly the same thing—three and a half years. 1260 days mean 1260 DAYS—not 1260 *years*.

It may be said that the whole elaborate structure of the Historical School rests mainly upon a single pier,—the "Year-Day" theory. Now this pier is imaginary and unsubstantial, while its base rests upon a

veritable quicksand,—being a good illustration of a double negative. The “Year-Day” theory starts with the assumption that the seventieth week of Daniel 9 was fulfilled at the time of our Lord’s crucifixion. But Daniel 9: 25, 26, in plainest terms, makes the cutting off of the Messiah the terminus of the *sixty-ninth* week. That the seventieth week still remains unfulfilled is apparent from a careful reading of verse 24. And it is this seventieth, or unfulfilled week, of which the greater part of the Apocalypse treats, in Chapters 4-19.

So much for the *foundation* on which this pier, or theory, rests. But the theory itself is no more true and substantial than the foundation on which it stands; for there is no warrant in the inspired Word for taking “day” in the mystical sense of *Year*. We say this advisedly, after a careful consideration of Num. 14: 34, and Ezek. 4: 5, 6. In both these passages “day” is used in the sense of *day*, and year retains its usual meaning of *year*. But in each case the Lord is careful to explain that in the place of days, *He* will reckon years. The reason for such a substitution is perfectly obvious in both cases, but is altogether wanting in Daniel and Revelation. In the absence, therefore, of any authorization from Him, we should not “think to change the times.” \*

In Chapters 11, 12 and 13 there are three expressions that invite our careful attention:

1. “Forty and two months” is twice met, in 11:2 and 13:5.

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\* See Appendix C.



2. "One thousand two hundred and threescore days" is twice found, in 11:3 and 12:6.

3. "A time, and times, and half a time" occurs once only, in 12:14.

That 2 and 3 are synonymous is evident from a comparison of verses 6 and 14 of Chapter 12. That 1 and 2 are also synonymous might be claimed from a comparison of verses 2 and 3 of Chapter 11. We will not press this claim, however. Let us rather compare 11:2 and 13:5 with Dan. 7:25 and Dan. 12:7, where the reference is clearly to the same period, when Antichrist, or the "Wild-beast," is under authority to do his worst against the saints. This affords proof indubitable that all three expressions—42 months, 1260 days, and "time, and times, and half a time"—are equal each to each, and may be used interchangeably. It ought not to require demonstration that the 1260 days mean *days*, not *years*, as is maintained by the historical interpreters; nor that the other two expressions mean three and a half prophetic years of 360 days each—not 1260 years; for there is nothing in any of the passages referred to above to indicate that the Holy Spirit would have us take such liberties in interpreting the Word.

It is however, easily *demonstrable* that these expressions all mean three and a half years of 360 days each. From Dan. 9:24-27, we know that one of the seventy weeks mentioned in that passage still awaits fulfillment. Only 69 weeks, or more correctly, *heptads* (literally "sevens"), had been fulfilled when Messiah was cut off. The remaining "week," or heptad, is manifestly the one mentioned in verse 27. In the mid-

dle of this week, it is said, "the prince that shall come" (*i. e.*, the Antichrist), shall break the covenant that was to hold for "one week," or heptad. And then follow the fearful doings of this "wild-beast" prince, who makes Jerusalem and its people desolate, "and," it is added, "even unto the full end," that is to say, *the end of the week*, (compare Dan. 12:7) "shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27, Am. Rev.). This is the time and period referred to so definitely in Rev. 11:2 and 13:5. That is to say, the 42 months are equal to half a heptad, or week. That one heptad, or "week," is equal to seven prophetic years of 360 days each, is most clearly and incontestably proved by Sir Robt. Anderson, in *Daniel in the Critics' Den*, pp. 129-134. It is there shown that the 69 heptads, or 69 times 7 years of 360 days each, was the exact period, *to a day*, between the commission given to Nehemiah to restore and to build Jerusalem, and the cutting off of the Messiah (Dan. 9:26), or 476 years and 24 days, solar time.

The three and one half years mentioned in Rev. 12:6, 14, are not, we think, to be identified with the period of the same length in 11:2, 3, and 13:5. The latter period is the *last* half of the week, the time when "wrath shall be poured out upon the desolate" (*i. e.*, Jerusalem). But the former period is the *first* half of this seventieth week of Daniel, when the woman "is nourished from the face of the serpent." Or, in other words, during this first half of the "week," a good measure of protection will be afforded to the Church. Thus the entire period intervening between the rapture of the saints and the overthrow of the

Antichrist, we believe, is plainly shown to be *seven years*,—"the time of Jacob's trouble"—coinciding with the last half thereof. The career of the "Wild-beast," or the Antichrist, is also shown in the book of Daniel to extend over the whole seven years. It is not impossible that it began at a point of time farther back even than the beginning of this seven years. It may be that more than three and one half years should be allowed in which he is coming into that position or degree of commanding power and influence, which are assumed as already his when Satan invests him with his own "power and his throne and great authority" (13:2). This is, perhaps, what is meant in Dan. 7:8 where he is spoken of as "a little horn," having reference, possibly, to the less conspicuous *beginning* of his career, or possibly the horn is "little" in view of the short duration of his kingdom.

## CHAPTER XIII.

HAVING failed in his purpose to visit the fulness of his wrath upon the Woman, Satan turns to enlist in his service a mighty human agent in whom and by whom he may work with better success.

Satan is greatly limited in his power to do all the evil he would like to do. He is able to use the physical creation to work injury to men, only in so far as God gives him permission. Study in connection with this subject the first and second chapters of Job; also the miracle of casting out the demons which entered and destroyed the swine (Luke 8: 26-36). In the case of the Woman, it is said that "the earth helped the woman." This may mean that the material world, by God's command, refused to lend itself to Satan's use against the woman and her seed.

As we have already observed, the material world is not, and never has been, a willing servant of Satan. The case, however, is very different with the race of *man*, in which he is ever able to find multitudes ready to give him willing obedience and service. And so, when the earth helps the woman, he turns with increased wrath to seek a fitting instrument from among men, by means of which he may be able to accomplish his evil designs.

Very naturally, some little time is needed in which to find his man, to get him invested with his own power and authority, and to start him on his evil

mission. This may account, in part, for the period of three and one half years during which the woman "is nourished from the face of the serpent."

As the Dragon (not John, see R. V.) stood "upon the sand of the sea," the prophet John "saw a beast come up out of the sea." The word here rendered "beast" means a *wild animal*. By its designation as a "beast," as also by its mention as "coming up out of the sea," it is intended to connect it with the four great beasts of Daniel's vision (Dan. 7:3), which also "came up out of the sea," and more especially to identify him with the Fourth beast as "the little horn" of Dan. 7:7-11, 19-25. In Chapter 11:7 and in 17:8 this beast is said to "come up out of the *abyss*." What is the abyss? \* From a study of Rev. 9:1, 2 and 20:1, 3, and from a comparison of Luke 8:31 with Matt. 8:29, it is apparent that the abyss is a place of imprisonment and torment for wicked spirits. His coming up out of this place would possibly imply a supernatural origin of the Antichrist. There is something extraordinary suggested or necessitated by the fact of his coming up out of the abyss. Can it be that the two expressions coming "up out of the sea" (which some understand as meaning the "sea of humanity"), and the "coming up out of the abyss," indicate a duality as to the personality of the Antichrist? Some have held that he will be an incarnation of the Devil—the incarnate son of the Dragon; as Jesus Christ was the incarnate Son of God. Christ came down from *above*—from heaven. The Antichrist will come from *beneath*—"out of the abyss." From

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\* For a fuller treatment of this word, see Chap. 20.

the account we have of him in verses 1 and 2, he seems to be a human replica of the Evil One himself. Compare 12:3.

The "ten horns and seven heads" are doubtless intended to represent *sovereignty* under different aspects. For in 12:3 the *heads* were crowned with diadems, while in this passage the diadems are on the *horns*. Then again, in 17:10 (R. V.), an inspired interpretation of "head" is given. "The seven heads," it is said, "are seven *kings*," i. e., *kingdoms*, as explained of six of them, in the same verse, while *the seventh is both a kingdom and its only king*. In prophetic language a *horn* signifies a *king*, or a *sovereign power* (Dan. 7:24, Zech. 1:18, 19). We understand the symbols to have the same meaning here that they have in 12:3 and in Chapter 17. But there is this difference, a *head* signifies *imperial* dominion, which horn does not. As a horn grows out of a head, so subordinate kingdoms are generally found within an Empire. That was the case in regard to all the seven Empires referred to in 17:10, 11. The horns here mentioned are the ten kingdoms yet to arise in the time of the end, all of which will be confederated under the imperial sovereignty of the Antichrist. These ten kingdoms are spoken of in Daniel (Chap. 7) as belonging to "the fourth beast," or "fourth kingdom," viz., *Rome* (Dan. 7:23); while Rev. 17:10, 11, views them as forming a distinct Empire by themselves, *the seventh*. No mention is made in the Revelation of the Antichrist "putting down three kings" (Dan. 7:20, 24), except inferentially. Having put down three kings, seven (*Horns*) remain. He him-



self makes the *eighth*, and yet he "is of the seven" (*Heads*). Of course, no one with a reflective mind should see any discrepancy between Daniel's prophecy and Revelation. Probably it is in this *revival* of the Fourth kingdom (the Roman Empire) of Daniel that the true explanation of 13:3, 12, is to be found,—in the healing of one of the heads which "had been smitten unto death," but whose "death stroke was healed." And yet this explanation does not seem to meet all the requirements of the various passages in which the Beast is mentioned (13:2, 12, 14, and 17:8, 10, 11). In Chapter 13, the reference to the Beast seems to be to it as an INDIVIDUAL, while in Chapter 17 the reference is evidently to the Beast as an EMPIRE.

Speaking of 13:3, Dr. Anderson says that its language "suggests that there will be some impious travesty of the resurrection of Our Lord." \* Many of the early Christians held that the Emperor Nero, who died by "the stroke of the sword" (ver. 14), will be brought again to life by a Satanic resurrection, and will be the great persecuting Antichrist of the last days. Some modern interpreters have inclined to the same view. But this, at best, is only conjectural.

In this connection, we may also consider another passage: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder \* \* \* \* when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come" (17:8). This verse, and, in fact, the whole passage in which it stands, regards the Beast as an EMPIRE,—the Sev-

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\* The Coming Prince, p. 208, Note.

enth great *world-power*. How are we to understand the words, "he was, and is not, and shall come"? We understand it has having undoubted reference to the *Roman Empire*, which is here spoken of as *having been in existence*, which *would cease to continue*, and which *would come again into existence*. The words οὐκ ἔστιν, *is not*, are here to be given the force which the verb εἶμι, *to be*, often has, viz., *to be found, to continue in existence*. (See Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*, εἶμι under A. 1; also Thayer's *Lexicon of the New Testament*, εἶμι I. 1.) We would therefore understand the words οὐκ ἔστιν not as rendered in our English Bibles, *is not*, but "*continues not in existence*." The meaning of the verse would therefore be, that this beast was in existence, then ceased to exist, and would again come up out of the abyss and be present on the earth "in the time of the end." No forcing whatever of the meaning of the words in the Greek is required in order to find in them a reference to the Roman Empire.

It is quite certain that there is a symbolical meaning also attaching to the number *ten* in the symbol of the ten horns. This number, we believe, indicates *universality*. As the ten Virgins of the parable symbolize the Church universal, the whole body of Christian believers on the earth, so, it may be said, the ten horns would symbolize the universal or world-extensive dominion of the Beast. So also the number *seven* must have its own symbolic meaning,—seven being rather a *time* word. Both symbols were used in describing the dragon, in Chapter 12:3. The "seven heads" have there, we believe, reference to the *Age-duration*, and

the "ten horns" to the *world-extent* of his kingdom. We know that Satan's Empire embraces "all the kingdoms of the world" (Luke 4:5, 6; compare with I Jno. 5:19). In verse 2, we are told that the Dragon will give the Beast his power and his throne. This is important as determining the extent of the Empire of the Antichrist. It is a very common belief among Futurist interpreters that the sphere of the Antichrist's supremacy will be limited to the *ancient Roman world*. At one time the writer himself shared in this view. Subsequent study, however, has constrained him to abandon this opinion for the following reasons:

*First.* As just stated, Scripture is clear in affirming that Satan's Empire embraces all the lands of the earth. If, therefore, he gives his throne and power to the Antichrist, we could not explain it as referring only to that part of the world which was once under the supremacy of Roman Emperors.

*Second.* The wording of verses 7 and 8 is so clear and definite as to leave no doubt, in the minds of most readers, that it speaks of world-wide dominion and world-extensive worship and persecution: "And there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain." In the absence of anything elsewhere in the Word to show that these statements cannot be taken in their obvious sense, we are compelled to believe that the authority of the Beast is far more extensive than "the Roman earth," and that the persecutions he stirs up

are no less than world-wide in extent. Of the same import are numerous other passages, such, for example, as 18:3, 17, 24, the force of which is in no way broken by the fact that they are spoken of Babylon the Great. The principal argument on which the theory rests, which is here objected to, is Daniel's prophecy concerning the ten horns, or kingdoms of Daniel VII. This prophecy, it is held, means that the ten kingdoms which are to arise, and which are to constitute the "revived Roman Empire," are to cover precisely the same portion of the earth's surface as that which came under the rule of the Cæsars in the early part of the Christian Era. But there is nothing in the prophecy itself that necessitates, or even implies, such a limitation. The terms of the prophecy are such as to impose no restriction whatever as to the territorial *extent* of the "revived Roman Empire." If, therefore, Satan receives divine permission to invest this last Roman Cæsar with universal dominion, it would follow that the Roman Empire will embrace *the whole earth*. This is precisely what is outlined in Daniel's prophecy (7:23): "Thus he said, the fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces." This is a general view, or outline, of the Empire of Rome during the period of the ten horns and the other little horn. In verse 22, it is plainly declared that the kingdom of the Antichrist will be given "to the saints of the Most High" for them to "possess." The extent of this kingdom is further enlarged upon in verse 27: "And the kingdom and the

dominion, and (*even*) the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." The third conjunction of this verse (*Vav*) may be rendered *even* (instead of *and*), as often elsewhere. "The greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven" are words which refer to this same kingdom of the Wild-beast, which is to devour the whole earth and tread it down and break it in pieces. Thus from Daniel's prophecy also it is seen that the Word of God points to a much wider arena for the operations of the Beast in the Tribulation period than the old Roman earth, as many have assumed.

*Third.* These conclusions are further supported by another prophecy in Daniel concerning the image and "the stone cut without hands," in Dan. 2:31-45: "The stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the *whole earth*" (ver. 35). And since the "whole earth" here spoken of as coming under the dominion of Christ must not be limited to the Old Roman Empire, are we under the necessity of restricting thus the meaning of the same words in 7:23?

*Fourth.* The extent of earth's territory which is to be affected by the Tribulation judgments will also indicate the sphere of the supremacy of the Antichrist—and conversely. Luke 21:35 makes it very clear how extensively the world is to suffer during the Tribulation period: "For so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." The same testimony is given in Rev. 3:10. "The hour of trial," it is said, "is to come upon the whole world ( οἰκουμένη ) to try them that dwell upon the earth."

Can any one read Rev. 6:8, 9:15, 18, 20, and come away with the impression that those awful scourges are limited to the old Roman world? Does not a careful reading of the whole book leave the conviction in the mind that *all mankind*,—the whole earth's surface—is in the Tribulation? For additional proof on this point read Jer. 25:15-33, than which nothing could well be more clear and specific.

*Fifth.* Another strong reason for believing that the Tribulation will not be confined to the Roman earth is in the fact that there is no passage in the Apocalypse, or elsewhere in the Bible, that plainly teaches or implies that it will.

*Sixth.* The word *Oikoumene* is often urged in proof of the view we are trying to refute. A careful study of the word, as used in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, will show that it cannot be claimed in support of the restricted meaning of "the Roman world." We have examined all the thirty-nine passages in the LXX and the fifteen places in the New Testament where this word occurs. In some places in the LXX it refers to *Palestine*,—the land of Israel; but never of that part of the earth which was known in later times as the Roman Empire. In most cases it has the wider meaning of *the world*. Any one who cares to turn to the following passages in the English Bible will see how manifestly in them, at least, *oikoumene* refers to something more extensive than the old Roman Empire even in the time of its greatest extent. In each passage the word is translated *world* (Ps. 90:2, 96:13, Is. 34:1, Jer. 10:12). The verdict is quite similar in the New Testament, where it



occurs fifteen times. In five of these passages it has undoubtedly a restricted sense (Luke 2:1, Acts, 11:28, 17:6, 19:27, 24:5). Its meaning in Luke 21:26, Rev. 3:10 and 16:14 may by some be regarded as doubtful, and so we will not claim them. But in all the other seven passages the word needs to be taken in its widest sense. Note particularly the first four: Luke 4:5 (compare with ὁ κόσμος ὅλος in I Jno 5:19), Acts 17:31, Rom. 10:18, Rev. 12:9, Matt. 24:14, Heb. 1:6 and 2:5. Matt. 24:14 evidently requires to be understood as referring to *all lands of the earth*. For the end of the age has not yet come, as we expect it will come immediately after "this Gospel of the kingdom shall" have been "preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations." For after this has been done, "*then* ( τότε ) shall the end come." But, let it be observed, "this Gospel of the kingdom" had been preached *in every corner of the old Roman world* many hundred years ago. "This Gospel of the kingdom" we understand to be synonymous with "the Gospel of the grace of God." Some try to distinguish between these two phrases, understanding "the Gospel of the kingdom" to be a message, not for us in the present age, but for the *Jews* in the *coming* age, or in the Tribulation period, after the Church is said to have been caught up. But this cannot be maintained. Very decisive against it is Paul's use of both expressions in his address to the Elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:24, 25. "Preaching the kingdom" is there synonymous with the words "testifying the Gospel of the grace of God." See also Acts 8:12 and 28:31.

*Seventh.* Another reason for the view that the Tribulation will not be confined to the Roman world is this: other parts of the world are equally deserving of it. The people then living in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean will be no more guilty and worthy to suffer than the people outside the old Roman earth. For when the Tribulation days begin, all lands and all nations will have had "the Gospel of the kingdom" preached to them and will have definitely rejected it and its King.

*Eighth.* Were the sphere of the Tribulation and the kingdom of the Antichrist thus limited, what would hinder the inhabitants of that part of the earth from escaping out of it by fleeing across the border? In those days of rapid transit there would be an unprecedented emigration from a region thus specially under such fearful judgments. Verses 9 and 10, however, intimate that no such escape will be possible.

*Ninth.* Another proof is to be found in the extent of the dispersion of the Jews. All are united in declaring that these woes are certainly to be visited on Israel. As is so apparent from many prophecies, Israel will have been restored, *only in part*, to their own land, before the beginning of the Millennium. The sphere within which Israel will be dispersed is "among all the kingdoms of the earth" (Jer. 24:9). This cannot mean the *Roman Earth*, for the Jews are found to-day in greatest numbers in countries outside the limits of the old Roman Empire, which many are wont to style "the prophetic earth." Jer. 24:9, Deut. 28:64, Ezek. 34:11-15, and other passages would indicate that "the prophetic earth" includes

Russia, Germany, North and South America, South Africa, Australia and Eastern Asia.

We have spoken of the Antichrist as being a Roman Emperor. This is manifest from the first verse of this chapter. From verse 2 it is to be understood that he also combines in himself the characteristics of the other three great world-powers of Daniel's vision,—Macedonia, Persia and Babylon.

Various names are given in Scripture to this remarkable man. Throughout this book he is spoken of only as "the Beast." Elsewhere he is called "the Prince" (Dan. 9:26), "the King" (Dan. 8:23 and 11:36), "The Man of Sin," "The Son of Perdition," "The Lawless One" (2 Thes. 2:3, 8), and "the Antichrist" (I and II John). This last name is that by which the Christian Church has usually known him. Although he bears the name of the "Wild-Beast," we should not picture him to ourselves as a monster in appearance. This name is given him to connect him with the vision in Daniel, as its fulfillment, and also in view of what God knows him to be, and what he will prove himself to be, ere the end of his career. But as he comes upon the stage of history, he will be regarded by the people of the earth as a veritable *King of men*. He is Satan's masterpiece.

In our blessed Lord, the transcendent loveliness of His character—the beauty of holiness, was veiled to the natural man. Because of His humility, meekness, self-abnegation, and His absolute standard of truth, purity, and holiness, He seemed to have no form nor comeliness. When men saw Him there was no beauty that they should desire Him. It was not the kind of beauty

that is attractive and pleasing to the natural man. He was a mere "root out of a dry ground,"—of no account, in the estimation of the unrenewed heart. Nay more, His was a kind of beauty and excellence that the natural heart of man was not content simply to neglect and ignore; it awakened antagonism. Men hated it and took sides against it. "He was despised and rejected of men." Such a person as this is the very opposite of what Satan would pronounce "the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely"; and so his masterpiece, the Antichrist, will present a wholly different type of greatness and acceptability.

This remarkable person, therefore, will be ambitious, self-assertive, spectacular, indulgent toward the follies of men. And yet he will be eminently "moral." Wild-beast though he is, in very fact, he will be a stranger to the grosser forms of sin commonly known as "beastly" (Dan. 11:37). With all this (at least in the early days of his career), there will also be seen blended in him a beauty and charm of person and a graciousness of manner that will be a perfect mask to his real character. He must also be conceived of as a man of transcendent genius, of phenomenal capacity to initiate and execute the many colossal enterprises with which his reign will be marked. Everything points to his being the most popular sovereign of the age. It was to him our Lord had reference when He said, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jno. 5:43).

Such is the man who will come in the time of the end, to a world that has rejected Him who is the Truth, and to men who have pleasure in unrighteous-

ness. During all the long centuries of grace and Gospel privilege, by sending His Son, by giving His Holy Spirit, by the voice of His Word, by mighty signs and wonders, by the witnesses of the apostles and prophets, and by the testimony of the whole army of martyrs and saints, God has been working to persuade men of His good will, and to make them understand that He would have all men to come to a knowledge of the truth and become subjects of the kingdom of righteousness. But they have hated Him, crucified His Son, resisted and "done despite unto the Spirit of grace," rejected His Word, persecuted and killed His witnesses. And now, at last, after innumerable warnings and millenniums of instruction and opportunity, He will send them one "whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thes. 2: 9-12). Since they would not listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, the "ravaging wolf," the destroying "Wild-beast," that devours and scatters the flock, will be sent them.

Daniel's vision mentioned no particular beast as signifying Rome, as in the case of the other three kingdoms; but from the founding of Rome, and all down through its history, the wolf which suckled Romulus and Remus has been a peculiar symbol of Rome: a fitting type of the kingdom in the latter time

“when transgressors are come to the full,” concerning which it is written, “A king of fierce countenance and understanding dark sentences shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and he shall prosper and do his pleasure, and he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people. And through his policy he shall cause craft (deceit) to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and in their security shall he destroy many. He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (Dan. 8:23-25). When this man comes, who is after Satan’s own heart, he will give “him his power and his throne” and “authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb.” All these things had been offered to Christ, but He refused to take them from the hand of Satan. The Antichrist, however, will have no such scruples. What the Son of God refused, the Son of Perdition will not hesitate to accept.

In this connection it is interesting to consider that three and a half years is the period during which the Antichrist enjoys “the kingdom and the power and the glory” of earth, and has “authority to do his works” (marginal reading, ver. 5; compare “and he shall prosper and do his pleasure,” Dan. 8:24, R. V.). This is also the length of the public ministry of the true Christ, in His humiliation, who did not do His own will, but the will of the Father. The contrast is



rendered all the more striking when we reflect that Christ, in consequence of His perfect submission to the will of God, "shall reign for the ages of the ages," "King of kings, and Lord of lords," not only on the earth, but also in the heavens; while the reward to be meted out to the Antichrist will be that he will be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" where he "will be tormented day and night unto the ages of the ages" (Rev. 20:10).

The forty-two months, or three and a half years, mentioned in verse 5, is the last half of the Tribulation week,—the time during which he is carrying out the foreordained program given in verse 7, during which time "it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (compare Dan. 7:25 and 12:7). Echoes of this war and fearful persecution have already been heard in Chapter 6, when the Fifth Seal was opened and the saints cried out from under the altar. Imagination fairly staggers under the effort to picture the sufferings and terrible deeds of violence that will be inflicted on the people of God during those awful three and a half years.

Notice the mention once and again in this chapter of the saints. These are no "Jewish remnant" (although there will be many Hebrews among them), but *saints*—the same kind of saints that Paul addressed his letters to. They are "fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (Eph. 3:6); for the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, is not yet declared to have "made herself ready" (19:7).

Words of encouragement and exhortation are

spoken in verses 9, 10, to those whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life. They are here told that if they suffer they will "suffer according to the will of God," and that "the patience and faith of the saints" will best be proved by non-resistance in their steadfastness (Matt. 5: 39, R. V.) and by endurance in suffering whatever comes. Under the universal dominion of this merciless Roman, escape will be impossible. Have we not here good proof that the "sphere of the tribulations" is not bounded by the Euphrates on the east, and England on the west, by northern Arabia on the south, and on the north by a line running from Odessa to Vienna, and thence to The Hague? Surely if the Empire of "the Coming Prince," and the region to be visited by the tribulations were to be thus delimited, would the saints be counseled to make no effort to escape? Would they not have been urged to make haste and flee across the borders of his dominions, as they were warned to flee from Jerusalem when the "Abomination of desolation" should be set up in that city?

The second beast mentioned in verses 11-16 is also designated *θηρίον*, or "wild-beast." This is another destroyer of God's flock—one of those of whom it is said, "Woe unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith Jehovah" (Jer. 23: 1). He is spoken of as "coming up out of the earth." The first Beast came "up out of the abyss," the prison-house of evil spirits. This one comes "up out of the earth." He is of earthly origin. And yet he, too, is one of the seed of the Serpent who sends him; for though he had the marks and appear-

ance of a lamb, he betrays his real origin and nature by his speech. *He speaks like a dragon.* In 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10, this second Beast is also called "the false prophet." How perfectly he was foreseen and foretold by Christ, when He said "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15),—not that this second Beast is the only false prophet that has come to lead astray the people of the faith. The Old Testament books tell us of many such. Early in the history of the Christian Church also there were many like them. For John, in writing to Christians in the first century, tells them that already "many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). And from that time down to the present, this "generation of vipers" has gone on increasing. But in the time of the end there will come one who deserves pre-eminently the name of "*the* false prophet," just as the Antichrist is the chief and prototype of all the many antichrists which had begun to come in numerous succession in the time of the apostle, who wrote in the same letter, "even now have there arisen many antichrists" (I John 2:18). It is only "*in the latter time of their kingdom*," when transgressors are come to the full," that the *civil power* will gather itself together and head up in one superhuman manifestation of lawlessness and iniquity, bearing names of blasphemy on his heads. And at the same time, coinciding with the revealing of "the lawless one," with an exactness and precision characteristic of all of God's programs, the *ecclesiastical power* will head up in a similar manifestation of preternatural eminence in bearing witness,

not to God's truth, but to Satan's lie. In the endowment and investiture of these two persons, the very utmost of Satan's great power will seem to exhaust itself.

The first Beast is a great *political* sovereign. The false prophet seems to be the *religious* head of the Empire of the Antichrist. This is the first instance, probably, in the history of the world when the secular and ecclesiastical\* powers of a kingdom will be perfectly harmonious.

As the first Beast is a travesty of the Christ, the Lord of Glory, so this second Beast is the Devil's imitation of the Holy Ghost. Notice the closeness of the imitation. The Holy Spirit has been sent to be the Vicegerent of Christ in the Church throughout this age. The false prophet "exerciseth all the authority of the first Beast in his sight." The Holy Spirit causes men to believe on and worship Christ who has been raised from the dead. The false prophet "maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first Beast, whose death stroke was healed" (ver. 12). The Holy Spirit sent forth the remarkable appearance of fire on the day of Pentecost. This false prophet, not to be outdone, "makes fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men" (ver. 13). The Holy Spirit wrought many signs by the hand of the Apostle to convince the world of the divine mission and deity of Christ, and thus to persuade men to

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\* The false prophet is commonly spoken of as the *ecclesiastical* head of the kingdom of the Antichrist. But as there is nothing whatever of the Church, or *Ecclesia* in their whole system, there is a manifest impropriety in using the word "ecclesiastical." We follow the general usage, however, because there is no other suitable word to use in its place.

honor and worship Him as the Son of God. The false prophet, by the signs and lying wonders which he wrought by means of the Satanic power conferred on him by the Antichrist, deceives men and persuades them to pay divine honor to the Son of Perdition (ver. 14). The Holy Spirit sets the seal of God upon believers in Christ (Eph. 1:13). The false prophet has his own special mark by which he seals the subjects of the Antichrist (ver. 16:17).

Here, then, we have the three persons of this trinity of evil,—*Satan*, the *Antichrist*, and the *False Prophet*. Satan is represented in Scripture as a *father* (Gen. 3:15). "The tares are the sons of the Evil One" (Matt. 13:38). "Ye are of your father, the Devil" (Jno. 8:44). "Thou son of the Devil" (Acts 13:10). "In this the children of God are manifested and the children of the Devil" (I Jno. 3:10). The Antichrist seems also to have been begotten of Satan. He is called the Son of Perdition. The false Prophet is sent and authorized by the other two. We had almost said that there is nothing of God which Satan does not attempt, in some way, to counterfeit. Here we have the mock trinity. In the Letter to Thyatira we saw the mock Church, and a little further on we shall meet it again.

Verses 15-17 afford another glimpse into the indescribable horrors and sufferings of those awful days, and what they will have to endure who will not worship the Beast or his image. Since the Antichrist cannot be omnipresent, it is not improbable that the image here spoken of will be reproduced, and innumerable copies will be made from it, and used in all parts of the world. Thus images of the Roman Emperors, in

the days of the early Christian Church, were numerous, and Christians were required to burn incense before them, as an act of worship, under penalty of death if they refused. Verses 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, make it seem probable that this feature of Roman history will be repeated in the day of the Antichrist. Those times of trial will be more searching and dreadful than any persecution suffered under Pagan Roman Emperors, or Papal Roman Inquisitors. The coming Cæsar will assume absolute control over the whole life of his subjects, such as no ruler in history has attempted. And then Israel, in particular, will have abundant cause for regretting their choice of Cæsar instead of Christ. Who can wonder that when John had eaten the little book, in which all these direful events were set forth, he described its effect as producing within him great bitterness of soul?

Few passages in the Bible have given more perplexity to interpreters than verse 18, where the number of the Beast is given as 666. No explanation that we have seen is altogether satisfactory to us. Seiss says that "six is the Satanic number." Others say it is the number of *evil*. These views are probably correct. In the Hebrew the word six, *Shesh*, is spelled with the letter Sh twice repeated ( שׁ שׁ ). The word is pronounced shêsh, a strong sibilant, the sound of a hissing serpent, at the beginning and close. In like manner, the English word "six" begins and ends with a sibilant, or hissing sound. In a similar way, again, the Greek word for six, *Hex*, begins with an aspirate and ends with a sibilant. This is not accidental, doubtless. These sounds are decidedly sug-



gestive that the numeral has symbolic import. The number of the Beast is 666, six hundreds, six tens, and six units. Six, three times repeated—an infernal trinity. The purpose of this number here may, perhaps, be to represent the highest expression of diabolic power which it is possible to bring to bear against the race of men, or upon any individual mortal. For in the Antichrist, whose symbol this mystic number is, Satan will have done his utmost, and will have exhausted all his resources to inflict injury upon the sons of men.

If such be the interpretation of the number, the whole verse may be regarded as God's word of encouragement to all who are sorely tried by the Devil, and, in particular, to those living in the days of the Antichrist, who will be tempted to receive this number of the Beast branded "on their right hand or upon their forehead." The Lord's people have no occasion, therefore, to fear one whose number is, after all, but "the number of a MAN." "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Is. 2:22). "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE events fortold in this chapter between verses 1 and 16, we believe, fall within the period covered by the first six Trumpets. Verses 17-20 fall within the time of the Seventh Trumpet, and are a brief, symbolic account of what is narrated in detail in Chapters 16-19.

One reason for this conclusion is that the 144,000 here mentioned is the same body as that we met in 7:1-6. That company of believers were not sealed until after the Sixth Seal,—that is to say, just before the opening of the Seventh Seal, and the sounding of the First Trumpet.

Some have supposed that the 144,000 of Chapter 14 cannot be the same as those mentioned in Chapter 7, because of the omission of the definite article “the”; because they are spoken of, not as *the* 144,000, but as *a* 144,000. But this objection can scarcely hold against other considerations which make for their identification. In the first passage, the 144,000 were to be sealed *on their foreheads*. In Chapter 14, the 144,000 are seen “having the Lamb’s name and the name of His Father written *on their foreheads*.” And again, “the history of the 144,000 in Chapter 7 is incomplete, taken by itself. No object or outcome of that sealing is anywhere stated, if not to be found in the passage before us.”\* By means of their previous mention in

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\* Seiss, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*. Lec. 34.

Chapter 7, the precise time of their activity during the Tribulation is most clearly defined. This affords another illustration of the care which the Lord has taken to make everything in this book clear and simple. The time during which the 144,000 do their work is the same as that covered by Chapters 8 and 9. They are indirectly referred to in 9:4 as having "the seal of God on their foreheads," and as being exempt from the plague of the scorpion-like locusts. Here we have another proof that in this palin-prophecy (10:11) we are covering ground already gone over in Chapters 6-9. Who these 144,000 are, has already been explained in Chapter 7, where reasons were given for the belief that in these 144,000 Israelites we have a partial fulfillment of the prophecy in Zech. 12:10: when the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have poured upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication, and from whose eyes the veil of unbelief will be removed, when they see the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, amid the terrifying events which follow the opening of the Sixth Seal. These are only an earnest of the great national awakening and repentance. They are the first-fruits of the greater harvest that will be gathered when Christ shall appear with the armies of heaven, after the last Bowl or Vial has been poured out. Israel, *as a nation*, is to be converted to God *by a personal vision of the Lord*. They will recognize their Messiah in Him whom they pierced. Paul was converted in this manner; but his conversion thus was *irregular*, he tells us,—ahead of time. He speaks of himself as "one born out of due time,"—an untimely birth. The 144,000 here

mentioned are "the first-fruits" from Israel. The first-fruits are always gathered *and offered* before the great harvest is brought in—that is, the nation as a whole. Is not this the true explanation of verse 4: "These were purchased from among men to be the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb"?

Much is said in these days about a "Jewish remnant" who will not escape out of the Tribulation, but be carried entirely *through* it, and into the Millennial age, to become "a first-fruits," or *nucleus*, of *restored Israel*. We have carefully searched the Word of God in vain for anything in support of this view. That there will be a "Jewish remnant," in the Tribulation days, is absolutely certain. In the 144,000 we have God's Word in proof of it; and so there is also "a Jewish remnant" in *every* period of this age. But it is equally true that the people of God of any period of the present age, whether Jew or Gentile, are *only* "a remnant." This Jewish remnant of 144,000, like the Gentile remnant of the same Tribulation days, will certainly be caught up out of the Tribulation, according to God's promise to all who "keep the word of His patience" (Rev. 3:10), and who "take heed to themselves" and "watch" "at every season making supplication that they may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:34-36). This last promise must not be regarded as spoken to Jews alone, and of such only as are living in the time of the Great Tribulation under the Antichrist. The error of taking promises and prophecies which concern *Israel*, in particular, and making them refer primarily to the *Church*, is no

greater than that of taking prophecies and promises inclusive of all the saints, and restricting them to Israel. Under the Mosaic law the first-fruits were not only gathered, but were also offered to God before the ingathering of the harvest was made. Hence we should expect to find this body of 144,000 caught up to God by a resurrection and rapture before the end of the Tribulation. We cannot doubt that they form a part of that second company of Tribulation saints which are mentioned in 15:2-4.

In Chapter 14 the Holy Spirit has given us a few sketches or glimpses of God's gracious dealings with the world of sinful, suffering man during that awful night of wickedness and spiritual desolation. It would seem to be enough to soften the hardest heart, and melt it to tears of penitence and love, simply to read this chapter in connection with the preceding one. There is a tremendous contrast to be seen between the love and tender compassion of God and His good will toward men, in the one, and the malignity, the inhuman cruelty and the demoniacal fury of Satan's deputy, the Antichrist, in the other. Though iniquity abounds in superlative forms and degrees during the fearful chaos of those days under the reign of "the lawless one," even then "grace will abound more exceedingly." In that dreadful hour when many are receiving the mark and number of the Beast on their right hand or forehead, God does not stand aloof from those who are ready to confess Him. And upon those who turn to Him from the tribes of Israel, He sets "the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4). This seal is the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father. The Holy

Spirit by whom all believers are sealed (Eph. 1:13, 4:30) will therefore be present in the earth, to perform His office in the days of which we are speaking. It seems strange that it should have been held and taught otherwise. Has not the Spirit been definitely promised (John 14:16) "in order that He may be with you unto the age" ( εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα )? Will this age close, or the new age come in, before the Seventh Trumpet has sounded and the Bowls shall have been poured out? Certainly not. Then we have Christ's sure word of promise that the presence, regenerating power, fellowship, strength, guidance, and comfort of the blessed Paraclete will not be wanting in those days of sorest trial. And so too, in the furnace of Tribulation already heated seven times more hot, the form of the Son of God will walk with those faithful Hebrews who refuse to fall down and worship the image of the king who far exceeds Nebuchadnezzar in might and majesty.

The Mount Zion of verse 1 is the Mount Zion of the Old Testament, in the literal, earthly Jerusalem. The new song which John heard coming from heaven "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder," was caught up by the 144,000 and no one else on earth was able to learn it. Of this song Alford well says, "It has regard to matters of trial and triumph, of deep joy and heavenly purity of heart, which none other among men but these pure and holy ones are capable of apprehending. This heavenly song speaks only to the virgin heart and can be learnt only by those who accompany the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."



These 144,000, we are told, are Christians. They are Hebrews bearing the name of the Lamb and following Him,—“Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile;” or, as stated in verse 5, “in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.” Verse 4 doubtless means that they are all thoroughly separated from the world, having no fellowship with it whatever. They are obedient to the Lamb in every detail of their life. Friendship with the world is, throughout Scripture, characterized as a breaking of one’s marriage vow,—adultery. See particularly Jas. 4:4. And the meaning here must be, that in their loyal obedience to Christ, and in the remarkable degree to which they have yielded themselves to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, they are espoused to Christ and faithful to Him as pure virgins (II Cor. 11:2). In the Apostle Paul, we have an illustration of what each one of these 144,000 will be. Their description in verses 4 and 5 tallies exactly with what we know of Him through the books of the New Testament. What a mighty army of missionaries, and what a power for righteousness, do we then see in this great company going forth to proclaim the living Gospel! It is not definitely stated what the precise sphere of their service will be. May it not be the whole world? “These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” The Lamb does not remain on Mount Zion. That is the spot where this army of Christian workers will *muster*, but their destination, we believe, will be to all lands to which the Lamb shall send them, and whither He Himself shall lead them to be His witnesses. Confirmation of this view seems to be added in verses 6-12, in which God

seems to be telling us of other agencies by which He will powerfully aid and supplement the testimony of this great army of Hebrew missionaries.

The three angels seen in the vision have each one his own particular message, but they all have one object in view, of declaring God's gracious purposes to all who will hearken; and His warnings to those who will not obey. The messages of these angels are proclaimed *with a loud voice* "unto them that dwell on the earth even unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people." The second and third angels, it should be noticed, "*follow*" the first angel. Their messages are therefore to the same people. If these proclamations are for those alone who are living within the limits of the old Roman world, would not God have directed the prophet to say so, instead of leaving him to convey the impression that they were for all the people of the world? It matters little whether we accept the rendering of the Revised Version in verse 6 "having eternal good tidings to proclaim," or whether we retain that of the Authorized—"having the everlasting Gospel"; those who dwell on the earth will have the Gospel of the grace of God presented to them with exceptional fulness and power in those days.

In writing to the Galatians, Paul once declared that the Gospel message which he preached was to be firmly held, although an angel from heaven should preach what was not in agreement therewith. But in the days to which these prophecies point, the inhabitants of the earth will have the testimony of His Word powerfully endorsed by the proclamation of these heavenly messengers who are "mighty in strength."

If, therefore, the judgments to follow are seven-fold more grievous than heretofore, they will fall on people that have persisted in their unbelief, despite their exceptional light and opportunity.

There is a gradation in the messages of these three angels. That of the first is a message of good tidings; a word of *promise* to all who should heed the exhortation. The message of the second angel is one of *warning*. The third message is full of solemn and most awful *threatenings*.

In the words "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great," of the second angel, we are not to understand that her *judgment* had already fallen upon her. Her punishment has not yet come. The word "fallen" refers not to the destruction of the city, but to the fearful depths of wickedness to which Babylon will have fallen in the time of which we are speaking, when her apostacy will be complete. The climax in this apostacy is reached when God utterly abandons her to Satanic possession. A similar declaration is made in 18:2, in which her fall is spoken of as consisting in her having become the home, or asylum, of every evil thing, "a habitation of demons and a hold of every unclean spirit and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird." The *doom* of Babylon is the final incident in her fall. What is meant by "Babylon the Great" will be explained under Chapter 17.

Let us bear in mind the important difference between the *vision* of the third angel and the *proclamation*, of which it is a prophecy. The prophecy was given more than 1800 years ago; the proclamations have not yet been made. The *prophecy* (vers. 9-12) is for our sake,

and for the instruction of all the Lord's servants in this age, beginning with the Seven Churches in Asia, to whom the Apocalypse was originally addressed; but the *proclamation* will be made in the days of the Antichrist, and will be specially for the sake of all who shall be tempted to conform to the spirit of the times, or who, from fear of the persecuting power of the Antichrist, shall think to escape by bowing in worship before his image and receiving his mark.

How are we to understand verse 13? For whom were these words specially written? Are they for the encouragement in particular, of those who suffer such fearful persecutions at the hands of the Beasts? Or are they equally for our instruction and comfort? Most certainly the latter. They have been a source of unspeakable comfort to millions of dying believers in the past eighteen centuries, and rightly so. But why were they spoken and recorded at this particular place in the Scripture? They who died in the Lord in the first days of Gospel privilege were immediately blessed; but the full consummation of their blessedness still tarries. They are still "waiting for the revealing of the sons of God." Their "adoption"\* that is "the redemption of their body," is not yet an accomplished fact (Rom. 8: 19-23). Their redemption and salvation will not be complete until "that which is mortal" (the body) is "swallowed up of life" (II Cor. 5: 4), and comes into the full estate and privilege of sonship. And even after this "revealing of the sons of God," and all that takes place at the time of that *near-by* "divine event," that is, the Pre-Tribulation resurrection

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\* See Appendix D.

and rapture—aye, and also after the Mid-Tribulation rapture—there will still be something wanting to their perfect blessedness, but which, this verse declares, is immediately to be supplied.

But in order to come still nearer the real meaning of this verse, let us carefully observe the exact expression here found. It is not written, "Blessed are they that die in the Lord," but, "Blessed are *the dead* that die in the Lord." To most readers there is no practical difference between these two expressions. But in reality the difference is exceedingly great. For in this beatitude, it is the *corporeal part* of those dying in the Lord that is brought into prominent notice. The souls or spirits of men are never, in Scripture, spoken of as "the dead." In the New Testament, with the exception of Matt. 8:22, Jno. 5:25, Eph. 2:1, Col. 2:13, and Luke 15:24, 32, where the meaning is plainly figurative and must be taken in the sense of *spiritually dead*, the words *oi νεκροί*, "the dead," are used with special reference to the *bodies* of those who have departed this life; or rather, let us say, they are never used without reference to the physical, or material, part of man. When our Lord said to the crucified robber, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," He was not making a promise to the physical, or corporeal part of the man. That was to be buried in the ground, and crumble into dust. The "thou" to whom the words were spoken was the *soul* of the man. The soul is not mortal, like the body,—that is, subject to physical death. It needs to be borne in mind that man has a two-fold nature. He is corporeal, and incorporeal. At his death, the soul (and

spirit) leaves the body and goes to its own place; but the body is laid away in the earth and returns to dust. Now it is to this corporeal part of those deceased, as we have just said, that the words "the dead" (*οἱ νεκροί*) in Scripture refer. Hence this beatitude must not be understood as spoken concerning the immediate life of blessedness into which the *souls* of those dying in the Lord are ushered. That the souls of believers are immediately blessed, however, we have the most positive assurances of Scripture. Lazarus,—that is, the *soul* of Lazarus—was immediately, at his death, "carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom," a place of felicity, where he was "comforted" (Luke 16: 22, 25). To Paul "absence from the body" meant "to be *at home, with the Lord*" (II Cor. 5:8, Phil. 1:23).

What, then, are we to understand by the words of the verse we are considering? It is that those dying in the Lord are forthwith to enter upon a higher state of blessedness in which their physical being is now, at length, to have its full share. This is the time when "the dead" dying in the Lord really enter upon their true rest; for it cannot be that "the dead" are *resting* while they are "absent from the Lord,"—when they are disintegrated and mixed with the dust of the earth, and while they are being held under the power of death. This is not to "rest from their labors."

A further explanation given for the beginning at this time of their true rest and blessedness, is because "their works follow with them." Rest from labor implies the enjoyment of the reward of labor. The



time is now come when the rewards are to be given, and each one will "receive the things done in the body." The common interpretation of the words, "for their works follow with them," is that, at death, one's good deeds accompany the soul and increase its blessedness in the life beyond. No interpretation, however, could well be wider of the mark than this. These rewards are not given to the *soul* to enjoy, apart from the body, before the resurrection; for this is a matter in which, it may be said, the *body* is specially concerned, since the rewards are given for "the deeds done *in*, or rather *through* ( *διά* ), *the body*." Moreover, these works are not said to follow with the *souls* of believers, but with their *bodies*, which had been dead. The antecedent of the pronoun "them" is the clause "the dead that die in the Lord." Furthermore, these rewards do not seem to be given until the last saint shall have been raised and caught up. This seems clearly to be the teaching of 11:18, in which the time "to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great," is indicated in its immediate connection with the coming of the all-conquering Christ (which is more fully described in Chapter 19), and prior in time to the destruction of "them that destroy the earth."

The phrase "from henceforth" is connected grammatically, not with the participial clause "those dying in the Lord," but with the word "blessed." Nor should the time referred to in the words be understood as dating from the time of the *vision* in Chapter 14. It dates, rather, from the time of which the vision speaks prophetically. The time of this announcement, as we

apprehend it, synchronizes with that of 10:6, when the mighty angel makes solemn oath that "there shall be delay no longer," and may be regarded as substantially a reiteration of that announcement. The words of verse 13 are specially appropriate, therefore, at this precise point in the whole history of redemption. This is why they are found here, rather than in one of the four Gospels, or in one of the Epistles. It is because the seven last plagues are *immediately to begin*, that the words "Blessed from henceforth" are spoken; for it is in the time of the Seven Bowls that all the saints will see the full triumph of Christ over His enemies, which are their enemies. Ere the end of that very brief time also, the rewards will be given, the Presentation of the Bride and her marriage to the Lamb will take place, and the full consummation of the blessedness of the redeemed may be said to have been reached. We may, therefore, see in the words "from henceforth" another one of those significant sign-posts, or guide-boards, with which this book abounds, for the purpose of guiding us to right conclusions.

At this point of time, we believe the second Tribulation rapture occurs,—just before the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet. This second Tribulation rapture is the subject of verses 14-16.

Chapter 14 closes with two scenes which represent the "Consummation of the Age,"—the Harvest, and the Vintage. The two scenes are wholly different from each other in their significance. In the first there is mercy and salvation. The second speaks only of judgment and wrath. In the Harvest scene (vers. 14-16) is represented, in symbol, the gathering together out

of the earth all the elect that are in it, according to the promise in Matt. 24:31: "And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from one end of heaven to the other." In the Vintage scene is delineated the gathering out and destruction of "all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity." In Matt. 13, this is described under the figure of a gathering and burning of the tares. Here the figure is that of the gathering and treading out of the grapes at the end of the season. The Harvest always precedes the Vintage. In the Harvest scene, the prayer of God's people is answered, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with men of blood" (Ps. 26:9).

The one who comes seated on the white cloud must be Christ the Lord. This is evident from the description of Him as being "*one like unto the Son of Man*" (compare with 1:13-18, in connection with 2:18); also because He had "on his head a golden crown"; and a third proof is found in its answering to His own Word that He will come "on the clouds of heaven." In this Harvest scene, as has been said, we have a fulfillment of Matt. 24:29-31. We speak of it as *a* fulfillment. In our comments on 6:12-17, we expressed the conviction that at that time the first fulfillment of the prediction in Matthew occurred. That there should be two fulfillments of the one prophecy, should cause no surprise. Do not the Old Testament types require it? The fulfillment of the prophecy in Rev. 6:12-17 was the gathering of the *first-fruits* (of the Tribulation) as an offering unto God. The one spoken of here is *the harvest of the Earth*. Later on, and in strict ac-

cord with the prophetic types, we shall also see the  *gleanings of the harvest*  gathered. Such are mentioned in 16:15 and 18:4.

That the Vintage scene is wholly descriptive of  *judgments*  is apparent from verses 19, 20, which speak of the "great winepress of the wrath of God," and of "blood from the winepress." There is no mistaking these symbols. They tell of the day of God's fierce indignation and long delayed vengeance. This picture, like that of the Harvest, is to be interpreted as symbolic. We do not know what is symbolized by the "blood even unto the bridles of the horses," nor what is meant by "as far as 1600 furlongs." Concerning this, however, there can be no uncertainty; these words speak of a fearful slaughter among the enemies of God that is altogether without parallel in human history. Certainly at this point occurs the fulfillment of Is. 63: 1-6 and Is. 34: 1-8. But this treading of the winepress takes place not alone at Bozrah, in the land of Edom. Other Scriptures also find fulfillment at the same time. There are other battlefields where the Lord will "thresh the nations in anger," and "will strike through kings in the day of His wrath." There is the great battle after the gathering of the kings at Armageddon, mentioned in 16:16, which is possibly the same as that foretold in Ezek. 39:1-20. There is also another in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. Read in this connection Joel 3:9-14, Zech. 14:1-3. Ps. 110: 5, 6 speaks also of this time, when the Lord "shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the nations. He shall fill the places with dead bodies; He shall strike through the head in

many countries," or as the margin reads, "over a wide land." See also Is. 66: 15-17, and Hab. 3: 3-16. All these passages refer to this "gathering the vintage of the earth" (ver. 19).

The Vision of the Vintage belongs, as has been said, to the "Consummation of the Age." It describes in a powerful outline the events of which Chapters 16-19 furnish the details. The Vintage season is the time when the Seven Bowls, or Vials will be poured out. This is understood by comparing the words "the wine-press of the wrath of God," with 15: 1, where it is said that in the seven last plagues "is *finished* the wrath of God." These words we believe to be closely connected also with the expression in 10: 7, "then is finished the mystery of God,"—so closely connected, in fact, that we may regard both as referring to the same time or event. The identity of the Vintage and the Seven Bowl judgments is further shown in the statement that the portion which was given to Babylon the Great to drink, when the Seventh Bowl was poured out, was a *cup* (much less than a bowl), "a cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." From all these considerations it is apparent that Chapters 16-19 are but the explication of the Vintage scene of 14: 17-20.

## CHAPTER XV.

THIS Chapter is a prelude to the seven final judgments or plagues about to be described. The full significance of the great sign of which the Seer speaks in verse 1 cannot be appreciated without a study of Chapters 16-19. Seven angels are seen having seven plagues, to whom were given "seven golden Bowls full of the wrath of God." Here we have the third series of seven. There were first the Seven Seals. Under the Seventh Seal was contained the second seven,—the seven Trumpet judgments. At the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, the third series of seven begins. Seven other and more fearful plagues are summoned to fall upon the people and age surpassing all others in the enormity of their crimes against a righteous, long-suffering, and loving God. The three series of judgments are expressive of the united will and working of the three persons of the blessed Trinity. As one series succeeds another, a marked *crescendo* in the severity of the judgments is observed.

But before the beginning of the final judgments, attention is drawn, for a moment, to another scene which is being enacted in heaven, wherein are seen the multitudes of those who had "come off victorious from the beast and from the number of his name," who had been gathered, as good wheat, into the garner of God. The



glassy sea, on the margin of which these triumphant hosts were standing, is, no doubt, the same as the one mentioned in Chapter 4. They were singing the great song of their deliverance. "The song of Moses, the servant of God," which Israel had sung on the shore of the Red Sea, speaks of victory, not as a future event, but as already an accomplished fact. This song, however, differs from the one recorded in Exodus 15 in one important respect. It is the song of Moses *and* the SONG OF THE LAMB. Those who sang the song of Moses at the Red Sea were not celebrating their complete and final deliverance. The wilderness with its burning sands, its weary wanderings, its painful trials and unsatisfied desires was yet before them. But these have no future trials to face. They sing "the song of Moses, *and the song of the Lamb.*" The meaning of this is clear; they are singing the praises of the great Captain of their salvation, who has not only delivered them out of the bondage of sin, but has also led them all the way through "the great and terrible wilderness," and has brought them into the final rest—the Land of Promise, the Paradise of God. "The song of the Lamb," speaks of the full and complete deliverance of this great multitude who through faith had been enabled to come off victorious from the Wild-Beast, the Antichrist, in the dark hour of the first six trumpets. How exceedingly unsatisfactory, then,—nay, how manifestly opposed to the plain purpose of God, to regard this whole scene as nothing but a "Preface of Blessing"! Mention has already been made in Chapter 11, of this strange theory which regards the scene of rejoicing here depicted, as also

the solemn ceremonies of Chapters 4 and 5, and the triumphal scene in 7:9-17, as proleptic, or anticipative, and not as really belonging to the time of which they seem to speak. In his comments on verses 2-4, the author of *Thoughts on the Apocalypse* says, "Here as in all former visions, we find the revelation of the final blessing previous to the description of the judgments that precede," (p. 331, 3d Ed.). But let us assure our readers that nothing of the kind has been "found" or can be found. These three scenes by which the Spirit of truth would inform us of the Pre-Tribulation and Mid-Tribulation deliverances of the ready and watching believers, are by this strange hypothesis made to teach that there is to be *no* deliverance for the faithful ones till the very *end* of the Tribulation! It declares that these glorious scenes of triumph and rejoicing do not belong where they are found, but after Chapter 19.

To speak plainly, this seems to us to contain, indirectly, a challenge to the truthfulness of God and the trustworthiness of His Word. It is unthinkable that God should so mislead us. Hitherto He has never led us through devious ways. Is it possible, then, that He should take a different course with us now, in this last book of the Bible to which He has given such a remarkable title, "the REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST," and of which He has testified "these words are faithful and true"? Again we say it is unthinkable. These scenes of triumphant rejoicing are placed in the description of the great Vision, not as detached fragments, unrelated to the passages in which they stand, but are living, breathing pictures, and they

cannot be torn from their own proper setting without mutilation of the Word.

If, however, any one still remains unconvinced by these considerations, most palpable proof is given in verse 4, that this triumphal scene belongs where it stands in the record, and not to the days of the Millennium. The author of *Thoughts on the Apocalypse* has failed to notice one of the Lord's way-marks which is found in the two future tenses in this verse. Here is a prophecy within a prophecy. This company of rejoicing saints are singing not alone of victory as already achieved. They speak also in prophetic song of the time when "all the nations *shall come* and *shall worship* before Thee." These two verbs are in the *future* tense. The importance of this fact cannot be exaggerated. *Their* deliverance had already come, but not that of the nations. The coming of the nations to worship before God belongs to the Millennium, *and dates from the very beginning of it* (Is. 2: 2-4, Is. 59: 20-60: 14). And as it will characterize the entire millennial period, the careful distinction here made in the tenses shows that the events of which they sing *as future*, lie wholly in the *future*, while their own full salvation and blessedness are here set forth as *a present reality*. Were this scene proleptic, or in other words, if it were a picture of *millennial* rejoicing, we should have had this heavenly company praising God and rejoicing because the nations were already coming to worship before Him.

This triumphal demonstration on the strand of the glassy sea must therefore take place just when it is said to take place,—before the First Bowl is poured

out in the final series of judgments, and therefore it follows, that as these rejoicing saints are seen already to have "come off victorious from the Beast and from his image and from the number of his name," their resurrection and catching up to heaven must take place before the beginning of the seven last Plagues.

These are the saints that were raised, or caught up without dying, at 14:16, and at the beginning of Chapter 10. Among the number are the 144,000 of Chapter 7 and 14:1, and also all others who have confessed Christ during the reign of the Antichrist subsequent to the Mid-Tribulation rapture, and who have endured unto the end.

## CHAPTER XVI.

IN their chronological sequence, the events of Chapter 16 follow close upon the events recorded in Chapter 9. This Chapter gives a brief itemized forecast, or description of the Third Woe. That which took place *in heaven* after the Seventh Trumpet had sounded was very briefly told in 11:15-18, but only a few hints were given there, in verse 18, to indicate what occurred *on the earth* at that time. That story was left to be supplied in its proper chronological place. Other events belonging to the time *before* the Seventh Trumpet sounded, needed to be told first. And now, in this chapter, the fitting time has come to narrate the course of events on the earth, when the Seventh Trumpet shall sound. An outlinear picture of these things was powerfully drawn in the vision of the Vintage. But now the Holy Spirit begins to fill in the details of that picture. In the remaining chapters of this Section (16-19), we learn what will be the fate of the Dragon, of the Antichrist, of the False prophet, and of Babylon.

Very little comment on this chapter seems to be required. The meaning is clear. Everything is told in plain terms and should be taken in its literal sense. The language is not symbolical. In verse 11 it is shown that the preceding plagues are still continuing when the Fifth Plague is in progress; for the sores and pains inflicted by the First and Fourth Plagues

are still causing great torment. This overlapping in the periods of the plagues, strengthens the conviction that there may have been a similar overlapping in the periods of the seals and trumpets,—one beginning before the close of the preceding period.

In both the Fourth and Fifth Plagues, it is made clear that suffering and punishment, in themselves, have no power to change the heart. It was thus in the case of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The same is true to-day, as we often see it demonstrated. In our own time, when appalling disasters and calamities come upon any section of the world, many “blaspheme the name of God who hath power over these plagues,” and are unwilling to repent and thereby given Him the glory. The length of time covered by these Seven Plagues is necessarily very short. Just how much time will be required for the assembling of the armies of the great confederacy of kings, and bringing them from the east into the Holy Land, there is nothing to denote. But everything indicates a hastening on of the end with great swiftmess. The mighty angel of Chapter 10 had taken a most solemn oath that there should be delay no longer. The Lord has declared that He “will be a swift witness.” When Judas, another son of Perdition, was going out to consummate his great crime against the Son of God, the Lord laid upon him the command, “what thou doest do quickly.” So again, when *the* Son of Perdition is gathering his confederates together with a similar design, it would seem that the same divine necessity of haste will be laid upon him. No human ambassadors are despatched to the confederate kings. Unclean spirits and demons are



sent out instead. And, in order to facilitate the assembling of the armies of these kings, God, in a miraculous way, dries up the waters of the Euphrates.

In Isaiah 5, there is an account of this event told in striking language. It is significant also that these words which are prophetic of the Vintage season, are found in the same chapter as the song, or parable of the Vineyard, which, despite the best care and cultivation, yielded nothing but wild grapes: "He will lift up an ensign to the nations from far and will hiss for them from the end of the earth; and behold, they shall come with speed swiftly; none shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind" (Is. 5:26-28).

Just how extensive the area is from which these "kings of the whole world" come, we cannot say. The word in the Greek here translated "world" is not *Kosmos*, the usual word for world, but *Oikoumene* ("the inhabitable world"), which sometimes has a restricted meaning, as was shown on page 175. It would therefore be unsafe to affirm that its meaning here is the "Old Roman world," or to affirm that it includes all the lands of the earth. Let us not suppose a long interval of time to be required for mobilizing and gathering these armies to Palestine. Their mobilization and movement may already have been effected long before, and their location at that time be not far from the place of their final rendezvous.

As in the time of King Ahab, there were lying spirits ready to lead this evil king on to his destruction, so in the day of God's indignation, a far worse delusion and infatuation will lure the kings of the earth to their overthrow. For this is the time when that prophetic word will find its fulfillment, "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Jehovah, and against His anointed, saying, 'Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us'" (Ps. 2:1-3).

We are not told in the Apocalypse what the prime object of the assembling of all these armies really is. Why should it have been stated here? What can be clearer and less ambiguous than the 2nd Psalm? It was unnecessary that the book of Revelation should repeat what is so plainly stated elsewhere. For it is assumed that the reader is familiar with what is revealed in other Scriptures. The Apocalypse, indeed, often refers to events already foretold in the Old and New Testament books, but it should be noticed that such mention seems to be for the purpose of giving to those prophecies their proper chronological place among the great events with which the present age is to terminate. The Second Psalm tells us that the real design of these confederate kings is to destroy the kingdom of God and the authority of Christ from the earth, and to banish the worship and mention of Jehovah forever from the world. What supreme folly! And yet there are few Christians in our own day who seem to realize how close we are to that one near-by

Satanic event, "to which the whole creation moves" with ever-increasing acceleration.

The allied armies gather together to that most famous battlefield of the world—the plain and mountains of Megiddo, or Har-Magedon. It is not said that the battle will be fought *at* Har-Magedon. It is of this mighty gathering and the battle that follows, that Ezekiel speaks in Chapter 39, which is the most complete and detailed account of it we have. "And thou Son of Man prophecy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; and I will turn thee about, and will lead thee on, and will cause thee to come up from the uttermost parts of the north; and I will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel; and I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou and all thy hordes, and the peoples that are with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah" (ver. 1-5). But read carefully the whole chapter. Some have supposed that Ezek. 39 refers not to this time, but to the great battle *after* the Millennium, mentioned in Rev. 20:8, 9; but verses 25-29 of that chapter are decisive against this view, and prove that the great battle of Ezek. 39 is *before* the Millennium; for it is not till after that overthrow of Gog that Jehovah "brings again the captivity of Jacob," and reveals Himself to the whole house of Israel.

That the day of grace will not yet be wholly past in

the time of which this passage (Rev. 16: 12-16) speaks, shines out in blessed contrast to the spiritual darkness of those days, during the Satanic raging of the nations. Even then the Lord will be inquired of, and will be found by some. The words of ver. 15 are addressed to such; for in every period of the Tribulation, as also in every period of the Age, until the Millennium dawns, the Lord will have His witnesses, of whom He will be as mindful as He is of His chosen ones before the Tribulation begins. These are the same as those to whom the words of 18: 4 are addressed: "Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." "My people," He calls them. Could anything be found in the whole Word of God more expressive of tender solicitude? His promises to us in Luke 21: 34-36, and Rev. 3: 10, are *their* promises, as well. For however terrible the sufferings of the Tribulation saints may be, there is something in the future more terrible still, from which God promises to deliver those who *watch*. These have already been spoken of as "the gleanings of the harvest," who are taken up and glorified before the Seventh Plague falls.

As has been noticed before, so here again, the lightnings and voices and thunders are invariably the premonitory signs of new judgments and greater woes. These omens preceded the opening of the First Seal (4: 5, 11: 19), also the sounding of the First Trumpet (8: 5), and the pouring out of the First Bowl (10: 3). The great cry from heaven, "it is done," which preceded these omens of the Seventh Bowl, signifies that the great climax has been reached. It is the conclu-

sion of the third seven. In the brief description of the Seventh Plague, in verses 17-21, we have but a synopsis of the divine program in Chapters 17, 18, and 19, of the great day which is to witness the overthrow and end of Babylon, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet, with all their followers,—the day of which it is written, “Behold the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Jehovah of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal. 4: 1).

“The great city” spoken of in verse 19 is *Jerusalem*, not Babylon; for Babylon is mentioned just after, in a way to preclude the idea of a second mention. Nowhere else in prophecy, is there mention of an earthquake at Babylon, while we are told in Zech. 14: 4, 5 of a great earthquake in Jerusalem at this very time, when “the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley, and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south.” Also for another reason, it cannot be Babylon, because the Babylon of the Apocalypse is not a literal *city*, as will be seen in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"BABYLON the Great" having been mentioned already, in Chapters 14 and 16, two chapters are now devoted to an elucidation of this important subject. Chapter 17 explains the name, who, or what Babylon is; its relation to the Church of God, and to the Wild-Beast, or Antichrist. Chapter 18 gives a most graphic account of her doom. So much space having been given to it in the inspired Word, well denotes the importance of the subject. Here again, as so often in the study of the Bible, we need to seek earnestly the special guidance of the Spirit of truth, that He may give us His own mind to understand this portion of it. It is confessedly one of those passages "hard to be understood" (II Pet. 3: 16); and if we go astray here, it may prove to us, as it has to so many, a key, not to *open* the book but to *lock* it, and thus keep it a secret, an *unrevealed mystery*. Were it a key to the interpretation of the whole book, as many have claimed, we should have expected it to have been handed us at the very beginning of our study of it, instead of its being found so near the end. We need to consider and ever remember, that the Holy Spirit has attended as carefully to the *arrangement* of the different parts of the book as He has to the *contents* of those parts. Hence we shall always do well to follow His order, as being the easiest, most natural, and best. The description of the vision



in verses 1-6 is full of symbolism. In verse 5 we are told that Babylon the Great is a "mystery." She is further described as "the harlot," "the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth." This, however, does not solve the mystery. But the Angel tells John that he will explain it: "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman." In the following verses, therefore, we have an explanation of the symbolism. And it is, indeed, an explanation that *explains*. The divine Guide into all truth has scattered many helps, or clues throughout this portion of the book. The pathway of the student is marked with many a prominent finger-post.

What then are we to understand by the designation "Babylon the Great"? The view which is most commonly held among evangelical Churches and which has prevailed from the time of the Reformers to the present, is that Babylon is *Papal Rome*. Another view is that of a prominent expositor who says: "Babylon, in a word, is *Apostate Christendom* headed up in Rome." A third view is that it is "*literal Babylon*, which city is to be restored as the center of the commercial greatness of the world," and that "the woman is the moral and political system of Babylon."

Let us apply the test of the Word itself and see how these views satisfy all the conditions. In the divine explanation of this mystery we are told that:

1. "The woman" is "the great city" (ver. 18), or "Babylon the Great."
2. She is "the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (ver. 5).
3. "In her was found the blood of prophets and of

saints and of all that have been slain upon the earth" (18:24).

Is the woman Babylon the Great, the same as Rome? No; for 3 could not be said of Rome, Papal, or Pagan, or both. Rome did not persecute the saints and put them to death before the beginning of the Christian era. We must, therefore, look for something that includes the blood of the Old Testament prophets and saints as far back as the time of Abel.

For the same reason, this woman cannot be Apostate Christendom; for "Apostate Christendom" does not meet all the conditions of 2 and 3. Great as her crimes have been, Apostate Christendom cannot be regarded as "the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth" which existed before Christendom had a beginning. Nor can it be said that "the blood of all that have been slain upon the earth" is found in Apostate Christendom.

No more can Babylon the Great be a "literal Babylon," nor the woman, "the moral and political system" of a literal Babylon, to be restored in the future. For no such Babylon, ancient or future, or both, could have participated in the shedding of the blood "of all that have been slain upon the earth." Literal Babylon, as a matter of fact, has not been in existence for many hundred years, and moreover, as will be shown later on (Chap. 18), it is the unmistakable teaching of Scripture that literal, or *material* Babylon will never be rebuilt.

Nor can Babylon the Great be a literal *city*; for we are told that Babylon the Great is "*a mystery*." That is, *it symbolizes something that has been in existence*

*throughout the whole period during which the saints of God have been and shall yet be persecuted and slain.*

Who then is this woman? In Chapter 12 we had mention made of another woman,—the Church of God, *i. e.*, the Church *on Earth*, imperfect, persecuted, in humiliation. Farther on, in Chaps. 19, 21 and 22, we shall see the Church in a different aspect. There it is the Church perfected, triumphant, exalted, *in glory*,—under the symbol of another, a *third* woman,—the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, who is also there described under the figure of a city,—“the holy city, New Jerusalem.”

Babylon the Great, the woman of Chaps. 17 and 18, is in perfect antithesis to both the other two. The contrast is striking, tremendous, awful. She is the *unholy* city, the Harlot, the False Bride, the Mock-Church,—“the Synagogue of Satan,” designed to be a counterfeit, or counterwork, of the true Church of God. Satan himself is an Antigod. As the Father gave His kingdom and authority to His Son, Jesus Christ, so Satan will give his throne and authority to the Antichrist. And now in this Antichurch we see this further creation, or imitation of his with which to oppose the will of God. This woman is the false, or Anti-Church, *in its comprehensive character*. It had its origin far back in the early days, beginning with Cain, who shed the blood of the first saint. Cain was a false worshipper of God. He worshipped in the *flesh*, and in untruth; for he “was of the Evil One” (I John 3:12); but “the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23).

Thus the woman of Rev. 12 and the Harlot of Rev. 17 had their beginning back in that first human family. In those two brothers, the line is already clearly drawn between the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent. This explanation of who, or what, is meant by "Babylon the Great," we believe, satisfies all the conditions of the description that we have of her.

Of a truth, Papal Rome *does* present a striking resemblance to the woman we see pictured in Rev. 17 and 18. But that is because we are so near to it. The saints of Elijah's time, or those living in the days of Isaiah or Jeremiah, would doubtless have thought it specially descriptive of their own times, could they have seen the picture.

As a matter of fact, this harlot includes *all false worshippers* of God wherever found: whether in heathenism and in other non-Christian religions; whether called Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or by the name of any other ecclesiastical system; or whether they belong to non-ecclesiastical, anti-Christian systems, such as Spiritualism, Christian Science, and Freemasonry.

This Babylon the Great is "the mother of the *harlots* and of the abominations of the earth." It is the teaching of God's Word that idolatry is adultery—the being joined to a harlot. So, too, of all other false systems of religion. The same thing is also true of *the love of the world*, which characterizes so many of the professed followers of Christ. "Ye ask and receive not," said James, in writing to Christians, "because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures. Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the

friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:3, 4). The worst thing about idolatry is that it is giving to another the worship, service, and love that belong to God alone.

As thus explained, this great Harlot, Babylon the Great, must include all forms of idolatry, every system that "worships and serves the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever," and all other forms of religion in which men attempt to come unto the Father in some other way than through His Son Jesus Christ. Seiss speaks of this mystic harlot as "the whole body of organized alienation from God, as in heathenism, false religion, and spiritual prostitution." Although she had her origin back in the time of Cain, before the earth was stained with the blood of Abel, the name "Babylon the Great" was given her, no doubt, because Babylon the *City* was the birthplace and metropolis (*Mother-city*) of the earliest revolt against God after the Flood,—the great original from which have sprung all the false systems and abominations that have polluted the earth from that day to the present. Hence she is fittingly called "the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth."

The scarlet colored beast here spoken of is the same Beast as the one we have already described as the Antichrist. Very little remains to be added to what has been already said in explanation of the "Seven heads and ten horns" in Chapter 13. The words are explained in verses 9-12. "The seven heads are *seven mountains* on which the woman sitteth; and they are seven kings." Many expositors cite this verse as con-

clusive proof that the Beast is *Papal Rome*—because Rome, the city, has seven hills. In the early days of Rome it was sometimes spoken of as having seven *hills (colles)*, never *mountains, (montes)*; but before the time of John's exile on Patmos, the city had extended so as to include no less than *ten* hills—not to mention several other smaller elevations, which were reckoned among the original seven. The ten hills of which we have spoken, with their elevation above the level of the sea, are the Capitoline 165 ft., Palatine 165 ft., Aventine 150 ft., Caelian 165 ft., Esquiline 245 ft., Viminal 175 ft., Quirinal 170 ft., Pincian 165 ft., Janiculum 275 ft., and Vatican 206 ft.

But, in reality, this verse itself is the strongest refutation of such a view. For it is immediately added that the mountains are seven **KINGS**. A mountain is sometimes, in figurative language, put for a *kingdom*; see Ps. 30:7, Jer. 51:25, Dan. 2:35. These seven heads, then, represent seven kingdoms, or better still, *Empires*. It is not difficult to point out which Empires they are. Indeed, the explanation follows: "the five are fallen, the one is, and the other is not yet come." The one that *is*, of course, could be no other than Rome, that is, the Roman Empire. And this, together with the help of Daniel's vision (Dan. 7), makes it clear that the other five, which were already fallen, were the great Antichristian World-powers of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Macedonia. Two of these, Egypt and Assyria, having already fallen, were not the subject of Daniel's prophecy. Therefore the Fourth Beast of Daniel 7 is the same as the Sixth King, or Empire, of Rev. 17, that is,



*Rome.* Out from among the ten horns of the Fourth Beast, or Empire, a little horn arises which is this new Empire, the Seventh Beast, or the Antichrist.

Rev. 17:11, taken in connection with Daniel 7: 23, 24, is very easily explained. "The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth \* \* \* \* \* and as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise, and another shall arise after them (the Antichrist); and he shall be diverse from the former and shall put down three kings." That would leave seven kings (*horns*) remaining, and he would be the eighth, which corresponds so perfectly to Rev. 17:11, in that the Antichrist is plainly spoken of as "*the eighth*." But because of his great power and remarkable eminence, and because in him is more than a mere revival of the Roman Empire, since, in him, there is the founding of a new Empire with the throne and power of Satan in his own possession, it is added that "he is of the Seven," that is, he is the Seventh in the succession of the great Antichristian *Empires, or World-powers*.

It is evident, from verses 12, 13 and 17, that these kingdoms represented by the ten horns will be formed into a confederacy under the Antichrist, the last great Kaiser, or Emperor. In the beginning of this chapter, the woman was seen *sitting upon* a scarlet colored beast having seven heads. In verse 9, while the idea is the same, it is the seven *heads* upon which she sits. The meaning of this is made quite clear in verse 18, where it is said, "the woman whom thou sawest is the great city which *reigneth over* the kings of the earth." This indicates that in the beginning of the

career of the Beast, the Woman had such a power and commanding influence in the world that the Beast was subservient to her, as all the six beasts preceding him had also been. "She sat as a queen" (18:7); but later on, in the time of the last plagues, a decided change is seen to have taken place. The Antichrist and his confederate kings will renounce her authority; and "they shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire."

These are strong words. What do they signify? They intimate that this is the time when the Man of Sin will reach the great climax in his iniquitous career, and will "oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting *himself* forth as God" (II Thes. 2:4). Hitherto he has "carried" the harlot. Up to this time, all religions of the world (except that of the "little flock") have depended on human governments for protection, power, prestige, and pelf; and this harlot queen fancies that this condition of things will continue forever. But now the ten-horned beast on which she sits resolves to extirpate every form of obedience and worship in the world, except that which is rendered to himself.

Every form of idolatry, or every perversion of true worship in the world, may be regarded as a dark and polluted rill from the "river" that "went out of Eden to water the garden" (Gen. 2:10). And although Satan himself had polluted it, making it more and more turbid and foul as men wandered farther and farther from God, nevertheless he hates it because it

is suggestive of God, and speaks of man's deep consciousness of dependence on, and obligation to Him.

For this reason, we believe, this Wild-beast, to whom Satan has given "his power, and his throne, and great authority," arises to sweep from the earth every religion that does not acknowledge *himself* as God, and to exterminate all who will not worship him, or his image, nor receive his mark on their forehead, or upon their hand. This time will not come, however, till near the very close of the course of the Man of Sin. It is only after the Seventh Bowl has been poured out, that "Babylon the Great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath."

As we have already shown to be the teaching of this book, three generations of Tribulation saints will have been gathered like good wheat into the heavenly garner before Babylon is thus "remembered." The great persecutions and shedding of blood of the saints during this period, and in all the past centuries, have been participated in by this same harlot, who is "drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." But the time is coming when blood will be given her to drink (16:6), and the divine command will be given, "Render unto her even as she rendered, and double unto her the double according to her works; in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double. How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning" (18:6, 7). The story of the French Revolution demonstrates how merciless and sanguinary it is possible for atheists to be.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

It was remarked in our comments on Chapter 14 that the words "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great," do not refer to the doom of Babylon, but to a moral and spiritual condition into which she had fallen. Corrupt and hateful as the False or Anti-Church ever has been, it will reach a much lower depth of wickedness and Satanic depravity in the days when the great apostacy is complete. The culmination of the Apostacy of the Church in the present dispensation is the *climax of Babylonianism*.

This climax will be reached after the catching up of the Man-child to the throne of God, and after Satan and his angels shall have been ejected from the heavens and cast down to the earth. Then Satan will apply himself with increase of malignant zeal to the execution of his purpose as "the deceiver of the whole world." In this he will be successful. His angels and subject hosts ("the birds of the air") will find a shelter and home in the branches of the mustard tree (the Visible Church), which, in the time when the Seventh Bowl is poured out, will have become synonymous with the Apostate Church, and will be the chief constituent in this mystic Babylon, this commonwealth of Amalek, or, as we have designated it, the False, or *Anti-Church*,—"the Synagogue of Satan." And then, we may be sure, will be seen a tremendous

increase in this wanton woman of everything hateful and abhorrent to God.

Several special reasons are given why God sends these awful plagues upon her. Because she had "become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird"; also because she was "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus"; and again, because "she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning" (ver. 7). It is the characteristic and glory of the true Church of God—the Spouse of Christ—to regard herself as a *widow*, now in the time of her Bridegroom's absence. "She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day" (I Tim. 5:5). She,—that is, the Bride of Christ,—is the importunate Widow of Luke 18:1-7, who, day after day, goes in to the righteous Judge to importune Him to avenge her of her adversary. Her prayer is continually, "Deliver us from the Evil One." "*Thy Kingdom Come*"! She is clad in mourning attire,—the garb of widowhood. For had not her absent Lord, the Coming Bridegroom, said, "Blessed are they that mourn"?

All this is in most striking contrast to the attitude and conduct of the false woman,—the harlot Babylon. "She saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow." She has her paramours, with whom she lives wantonly. She is satisfied with the world as it is. She has no adversary. She is highly optimistic, and is confident that all will continue to be well with her:

"I shall in no wise see mourning." And so she adorns and bedizens herself, after the manner of harlots, and in the apparel of a queen: "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls" (17:4). And thus in her self-contentment and fancied security, she abandons herself to a life of pleasure and wantonness.

If, therefore, those words of I Tim. 5:6, "But she that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth," are a true expression of God's estimate of the pleasure-seeking Christian in Paul's day, what must the case be with the shamelessly profligate woman in whom is found every abomination in its maturity?

About one half of this chapter is devoted to a vivid portrayal of the commercial greatness and importance of Babylon the Great. The story is told with dramatic power. This description of the commercial life and activities of this symbolic city is quite specific and detailed. For this reason, no doubt, it is, in part, that so many interpreters regard it as referring to a literal *city*. Babylon, they say, is to be rebuilt, and will out-rival London, or any other city of all the nations, as the commercial metropolis of the world.

We believe these conclusions to be untenable. The following prophecies seem unmistakably to settle the question quite otherwise: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. IT SHALL NEVER BE INHABITED, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there: neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there" (Is. 13:



19, 20). "And I will execute judgment upon Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: AND THE NATIONS SHALL NOT FLOW ANY MORE UNTO HIM: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. And I will make drunk her princes and her wise men, her governors and her deputies, and her mighty men; AND THEY SHALL SLEEP A PERPETUAL SLEEP, AND NOT WAKE, saith the King whose name is Jehovah of hosts. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, 'When thou comest to Babylon, then see that thou read all these words, and say, O Jehovah, thou hast spoken concerning this place, to cut it off, that none shall dwell therein, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate forever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring upon her'" (Jer. 51:44, 57, 61-64).

It has been shown that the Babylon of Chapter 17 could not be a literal *city*. There is nothing to indicate that the Babylon of Chapter 18 is not still the same symbolic Babylon the Great. It is still the False or Anti-Church that is here spoken of; and if her relation to the commercial system of the world could be rightly apprehended, we believe the meaning of this chapter would be seen at once. The great obstacle to a correct apprehension of it lies in our having been born and reared under the present system. We have been accustomed to its laws and methods till we have well-nigh come to regard them as fairly good, about

as good as could be desired. By reason of custom and habit, and because of our familiarity, or even of our complicity or identification with it, the proofs of its Satanic origin are not seen. It is because of our spiritual blindness that we do not perceive the enormity of its appalling wickedness. The world is proud and optimistic with regard to "this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4). On every side people vaunt themselves in "our splendid civilization." One of the mightiest of all the false gods that receive the adoration and votive offerings of the millions of mankind, is Mammon. And the essence and spirit of Mammonism is best seen in the commercial system of the present time, which dates from the days of Cain. By "commercial system" we mean that system which determines the principles and methods of commerce in all its infinite relations to our economic, social, political, religious, intellectual, and recreative life. For, as a matter of fact, this commercial system is a mighty factor in shaping the thought and conduct of men in all civilized lands, in regard to occupation, habitation, clothing, food, society, education, literature, pleasures, and worship. The commercial system seeks not the glory of God, but to arouse in man "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Its aim is to awaken insatiable desires for the things of the world,—its wealth, its luxuries, its pleasures. It draws the affections away from God, and sets them on material things, or on those things which minister to the psychic, or soul-life, of the "natural," or unregenerate man. Its object is to allure the soul from the enjoyment of a sweet peace and contentment in

God, such as is pictured in the twenty-third Psalm, and to start it on a wild chase after joys that are illusory, intoxicating, maddening. It is not our purpose to affirm or imply that business and commercial life has not its proper place. It is not to be regarded as being essentially evil. We cannot forget that the Lord Jesus was Himself an artisan, and sold for money the things His hands had made. But who can deny that in the commercial life of the world to-day all things seem to be conspiring to distract the mind from the consideration and pursuit of the things of God, and to foster a discontentment with what God has given us, and a longing for what we do not have. The remarkable thing about all this is that these things are so because this mystic harlot is behind it, in partnership with it, and controlling it.

Moreover, these evils of which we have spoken are peculiarly identified with what men are pleased to call "our Christian civilization." Nowhere outside Christendom are these things such marked characteristics, in the life of men to-day, except where some nation, like Japan, in her desire to be a great world-power, has begun to drink deep draughts from the same "golden cup full of abominations," and is making herself drunk with the wine of that fornication, from the effects of which the so-called Christian nations are now reeling.

Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, and Rome, each in their own time, attained unto the same "bad eminence." But as the Holy Spirit has told us, in II Tim. 3:1-8, of a time when the evil life and practices of the unbelieving and pagan world of Nero's reign will characterize the nominal followers of Christ,—the Visible Church, as

a whole,—so now it has come to pass; and what were once characteristic of the great world-powers of antiquity have become dominant to a phenomenal degree in the Christendom of our own time; and to-day the principal leaders in this mad and age-long bacchanalian procession are the great nations of Christendom. Strong drink is not the only thing that can intoxicate. The love of gain, the spirit of commercialism, is a form of intoxication quite as bad and destructive of all good as that which is caused by any cup of the most maddening beverage. "It taketh away the life of the owners thereof" (Prov. 1:19). "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (I Tim. 6:10). It was while drunk with this wine of Babylon that Judas betrayed his Master. To the same thirst for riches may be traced the betrayal of the same Master by multitudes of His disciples in the present day. The love of money makes men cowardly and pusillanimous in witnessing to the truth, and renders them bold and spirited in their disobedience to the commands of God. "Financial interest" is a Court of Appeals in which the decisions of "the Judge of all the earth" are lightly set aside.

The Scriptures acquaint us with the sad fact that greed of gain has ever been the chief temptation before which the prophets of the Lord have fallen, and by means of which they have been persuaded to bear witness, not to the truth of God, but to Satan's lie.

Balaam "loved the hire of wrong-doing" (II Pet. 2:15).

The young Levite of whom we read in Judges 17:8-11 was none other, it seems, than the great-grandson

of Moses, the man of God (Judges 18:30, Rev. Ver.). His departure from the God of his fathers was prompted by his love of money.

The sons of Samuel "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice" (I Sam. 8:3).

The remarkable picture drawn in Isaiah (Chapters 56-59) of the spiritual darkness and depravity which reigned in the Kingdom of Judah in the days of Isaiah, is all the more worthy of our study, because it finds the principal cause thereof in the spirit of commercialism having taken possession of the Lord's prophets. "All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; and these are shepherds that cannot understand: they have all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, one and all. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, a day great beyond measure" (Is. 56:9-12).

The "radiant optimism" of these false prophets in that dark night of depravity and alienation from God is in fullest harmony with the optimism and fancied security of the harlot Babylon in the awful apostacy immediately preceding her downfall (verse 7).

And yet, the responsibility for this state of things does not rest alone upon the shepherds. The people desire it so,—nay, they *demand* it: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their guidance, *and my people love to have it so*"

(Jer. 5:31). "For it is a rebellious people, lying children that will not hear the law of Jehovah; that say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Is. 30:9, 10). The prophets, in their cupidity, are obedient to the demand of those who have it in their power to promote them to honor. (Compare Num. 22:37). Accordingly it is further written, a few years later, "From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:13, 14).

From Isaiah 59 we learn that the condition of things described in the passages just quoted was not alone true of Isaiah and Jeremiah's time, but was specially descriptive and prophetic of the days immediately preceding the Second Coming of the Lord. Therefore the closing years of the present dispensation will be characterized by the same kind of shepherds, with the same careful regard for their own financial interests, who have the same fatal optimism, and the same inability, or rather unwillingness, to see things as they are, and to warn their flocks against the wild beasts that break into the fold to devour and scatter.

This agrees exactly with what a great prophet of the new dispensation has said, that "in the last days men (*i. e.*, Christians, in name) shall be lovers of self, lovers of money" (II Tim. 3:2), and "will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts"



(II Tim. 4:3). Notice the words, "will heap to *themselves*." That is to say, these teachers are the servants of *men*, rather than ambassadors of *God*,—not shepherds, but *hirelings*. "He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and fleeth" (Jno. 10:12). In other words, the hireling does not "lift up his voice like a trumpet" in warning against the false teachers, the false teachings, practices and customs that work such havoc in the little flock, but maintains a "discreet silence." He does not, as a rule, openly deny the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures; he may be "thoroughly orthodox"; but he sows his "vineyard with two kinds of seed" (Deut. 22:9). He mingles with the Word of God, "the precepts of *men*"—"a wisdom of this age" (1 Cor. 2:6),—that which is pleasing to the natural heart. In his fear of men he makes important omissions from "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). These omissions are eagerly seized by the ungodly and by the Christian worldling, as *concessions*, or *indulgences*. He avoids everything that would give pain to the world-loving Christian, or offence to the respectable unbeliever. He is keen to devise and perfect some *modus vivendi* by which Christians and unbelievers can get along together in loving fellowship.—"Dumb dogs, that cannot bark!" "Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam, *for hire*" (Jude 11). Under such shepherds as these, what can be expected of the sheep?

In such a time, therefore, we should look for a phenomenal manifestation of the spirit of Commercialism

in all the brilliance and fascination of its most seductive and fatal sorcery.

We have but to consider a few cases in our own time, and it will appear that the Commercial system of the present age is the creature, or offspring, of this symbolic harlot, Babylon the Great; and if in this brief survey the nations of Christendom are seen to be the chief transgressors, let us bear in mind that this is what we have been forewarned by Scripture to expect.

Looking, then, calmly and honestly at conditions in the commercial world of our times, what hideous abominations do we not see! What frightful inequalities in society! What mighty oppressions! What amazing perversions of justice! What intemperance! What violence! What deception and mendacity in business and professional life, for gain! Was there ever a period when the rich stood more in need of the stern admonitions of Jas. 5: 1-5: "Come now, ye rich, weep and wail for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted: and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure: ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter!"

Was there ever a time when the poor needed more

to heed the advice of Jas. 5:7-9: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold the Judge standeth before the doors."

This first-born daughter of Babylon—Commercialism—has filled the world with its numerous forms of wickedness: its desecration of the Lord's Day, by newspaper, trolley, travel, traffic, and trade; its evil amusements; its illegitimate occupations and professions; its prostitution of body and soul to do the works of hell. It corrupts the halls of legislation; befouls the springs of justice; poisons our food with hurtful and deleterious adulterations; and is silencing or corrupting the testimony of Christ's ambassadors.

Which are the nations to-day that are looking at one another with mutual distrust lest one get the advantage over the other commercially? They are chiefly the nations of Christendom. They are learning war and arming themselves at enormous cost, entailing great miseries to their people, because of what they desire to get, or from the fear that other nations will covet and try to take what they have. This insatiable thirst for commercial supremacy, this hunger for territory—for stealing a whole Empire,—is not new, to be sure, but to-day it is eminently "Christian."

Again, consider how this same commercial spirit has so often led to the persecutions of Israel, God's covenant people. Who have been the persecutors of the

Jews during the past 1500 years? Apostate Christendom in every case.

How came it about that China's millions are cursed to-day by the opium evil? Because for commercial gain, "Christian" England forced it upon them at the edge of the sword. And the opium traffic in India may thank the same symbolic woman of Rev. 17 and 18.

What is the case with the ivory and rubber trade in the Congo, which, it is declared, surpasses in its atrocities the awful slave trade? Another nominally Christian nation, for commercial gain, is the offending party.

Who were the participants in the slave trade of Africa, of America, of the Islands of the Pacific? Again the answer is, the nominal followers of the Lamb!

Whom have "the merchants of the earth" to thank for their enormous wealth made in the alcohol and tobacco trade? "They were made rich by *her*." Christendom is the producer, and Christendom largely the consumer.

For what cause did the great nations of the world recently take united action for the suppression of the sale of rum and fire arms to the heathen peoples of Africa, and the islands of the Pacific? Was it because of their body-and-soul-destroying character? Not in the least; but because these things were destructive to their *commerce* with those peoples! for rum and guns would depopulate those countries and thus destroy the market for their goods.

What are we to think of the "Christian" character

of a civilization that tolerates, legalizes, and protects, by law, the liquor business, that annually, in the United States, sends one hundred thousand victims down to drunkards' graves, not to speak of the sorrow and misery, the poverty, degradation, and inherited tendencies which it entails?

In every city of importance in the land, there is maintained, at great expense, a fire department, so perfect in equipment, and with men and horses so well trained, that within a few seconds after the alarm has been sounded, everything is in motion and rushing in furious haste to the scene of the fire, though it were only a burning shed or stable. But in the same cities there are large areas where in nearly every block there are one or more saloons, in which men have been *authorized by law* to set fire, not to sheds and stables, but to "*bodies and souls of men*" (ver. 13, Greek)! "Christian civilization" has no fire department for the purpose of extinguishing these fires of hell. Science rings no alarm for these blazing temples built to be the dwelling-place of the Spirit of God. "Christian civilization" lets them burn to the ground, and protects the men that set them on fire; for "Christian civilization" derives much commercial profit from this iniquitous traffic, and draws a revenue from the licensing of these "chambers of death."

Nothing can be found to compare with it outside Christendom,—not even in darkest heathendom. All these monstrous abominations are among the offspring—the harlot daughters of this great Mother of harlots; and the marvel is, that God has not caused the smoke of her burning to ascend long before this.

All these crimes, and many others of a similar kind, are laid at the door of this Woman, Babylon the Great, the False or Anti-Church. "For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen. And the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness." To her was it spoken "For with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived."

Dark indeed is the picture thus drawn, but who that has the mind of the Spirit would dare affirm that it has been overdrawn? Nay, the tenth part has not been told. With every passing month, the charm of her sorcery and the fumes of her body-and-soul-enslaving wine became more irresistible. Every new invention and every advance in knowledge is eagerly seized by her to increase the power of her wantonness.

It will be remembered that in the interval when King Ahasuerus had gone out of the banqueting hall, into the palace garden, "Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen." He found, however, that there was no hope for him in that direction. With Satanic villainy he then resolved upon a deed by which he hoped to involve the queen in his own ruin; for when the King entered, "Haman was fallen upon the couch whereon Esther was. Then said the King, Will he even force the queen before me in the house?" (Esther 7:8). The King had taken in the situation accurately at a glance. So to-day it is apparent that the Devil, the great Antitype of Haman, realizing that his time is short, is engaged in a most desperate attempt to compromise the Church, of which



Queen Esther is a beautiful type. By various means, but chiefly with the aid of this "Mother of harlots," the Anti-Church, he is trying to "force" the people of God, in order that the King on his return may cast them off.

"We are not ignorant of his devices," wrote Paul to the saints in Corinth. Oh, that it were true of all the Lord's people to-day!

In the meantime, God is calling to us by the heavenly voice, saying "Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (ver. 4).

The day of grace is drawing to a close. The doom of this City of Destruction, with all that appertaineth to her, is not far off. But when it comes, it will be as sudden and unexpected as it will be awful and complete. For "in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judged her" (ver. 8).

Such, however, is not the view men take to-day as to the means by which the regeneration of society is to be effected. They are busy making new plans for bringing about commercial, industrial, civic, legislative, and administrative righteousness; for the suppression of intemperance; for the enforcement of law; for putting an end to war; and for ushering in the era of "liberty, equality, fraternity." Vain expectation! It will never come by these means, nor by the efforts of men. God alone can do it, and it will be by terrible judgments. In proof of this we recommend a careful reading of Isaiah 59.

The means which He will employ for her destruction are clearly revealed to us in 17:16, 17: "The ten horns which thou sawest and the beast, these shall hate the harlot and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and shall burn her utterly with fire. For God did put into their hearts to do His mind and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished."

It may not be possible to grasp the full meaning of these words, in all their details. But in the utter madness and fury with which the Jacobins, under the lead of Marat and Robespierre, abandoned themselves to work the horrors of the French Revolution, so let us believe, with the same tiger-like ferocity, under the command and guidance of the Antichrist, there will be enacted all over the earth what was confined to a small corner of it in the days of the French Revolution.

## CHAPTER XIX.

WE have seen that the destruction of Babylon the Great is to be one of the last items, though not the final one, of the Seventh Bowl, or Plague. There remained yet "the War of the great day of God the Almighty," when the Beast, and the allied kings, and the False Prophet, with their hosts, come up to make war against Judah and Jerusalem.

But before the inspired seer passes on to the description of this stupendous event, there is a better, a more glorious, scene to contemplate. The Vision of Chapter 19:1-9 comes in between the story of the destruction of Babylon, and the account of the overthrow of the Beast and the kings of the earth, because it is the natural place for it. The account of the marriage of the Lamb and the glorious exaltation of the Bride, the True Woman, is much more striking and dramatic by its following so closely, and in such sharp contrast with, the awful repudiation and terrible punishment of the False Woman, the Anti-Bride. The last gathering of the saints out of the earth,—“the gleanings of the harvest,”—must have preceded the doom of “the great city.” This is known from 18:4. Whither could these saints go for safety? There was no place but to the presence of God and to His throne. This is the final rapture of the saints. It is the gleanings of the harvest. The reaping is always first in the

order of time. Or, to be more exact, the gathering of the *first-fruits* comes first, at the *beginning* of the reaping (Ex. 23:19, Lev. 23:10, Deut. 26:2-10). Then follows the *harvest*. Then comes the *gleaning* (Ruth 2:3, Deut. 24:19-21). The First-fruits of the Tribulation period were gathered between the Sixth and Seventh Seals (Chap. 7:7-17). The Harvest was gathered between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets (14:14-16, 15:2-4). The Gleaning comes in between the Sixth and Seventh Bowls, or plagues (18:4). It must not be forgotten that before the Tribulation period began there was also the birth of the Man-child (12:5).

How perfect is the agreement here with what our Lord intimated in Mark 13:35, as to the time of His coming: "Watch therefore, for ye know not when the Lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning." The Pre-Tribulation rapture is "at even," at the close of the day, and before the dark and stormy night of fear and trial shall have set in. "Midnight" is *midnight*, indeed,—a time of sore distress, out of which the Mid-Tribulation saints are saved. "The cock-crowing" rapture will take place in the darkest hour preceding the dawn. The "morning" rapture is for some who, because of unbelief, were lying so near the ground, or so far out on the border of the standing grain, that the sickle of the reaper had failed to gather them.

And now when all the wheat has been gathered, and the last sheaves have been brought in, it is fitting that the Feast of Harvest should be celebrated. This cele-

bration follows after the judgment on Babylon, the Anti-Bride, is accomplished (ver. 2). The passage before us speaks of the Harvest-home under a different figure,—the Marriage, and the Marriage-supper of the Lamb.

It is significant that this glorious event is placed by the inspiring Spirit of truth just here, and not in Chapter 4 or 5; for there is where it would seem necessary to assign it a place, if they are right who hold that the Church of God, the Bride of Christ, is wholly removed, once and for all, from the world, before the time spoken of in the Vision of Chapter 4. By these it is affirmed that the saints and martyrs made during the Tribulation are not members of the body of Christ; that they belong to another order of redeemed ones, and are in no wise a part of the Church. Not only do we find nothing in the whole Word of God to favor this view, but many things have been pointed out in the course of this study which indicate that *all* who are saved during the entire Tribulation period are also "fellow-members of the body," which is the Church of Christ, the "Church of the first-born." And, now, as a further and most conclusive witness to the same is the passage we are now considering; for it is not till the last saint shall have been caught up in the rapture of the gleaning time, that the announcement is made that "His wife hath made herself ready." We shall yet meet another proof of the same in 20:4, which, alone, would be enough to prove that the Tribulation saints are of the same body of reigning ones as the faithful in Christ in Pre-Tribulation times.

And is not this more in accord with what the Lord has shown us to be His mind or purpose in Matt. 20: 1-16? The laborers that were hired in the early morning, and also those sent into the field at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours, *all of them*, received *each one* a shilling. There were those who murmured because the wages paid the late comers were the same as they received who were first in the field. But the Lord of the Vineyard replied to these complaints, "It is *my will* to give unto this last even as unto thee." Therefore if some should think it unfitting that the Tribulation saints be admitted into membership in the Church of the first-born, we ought rather to rejoice in the fact, and to say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth \* \* \* \* \* that ( ὅτι ) so it was well-pleasing in thy sight" (Luke 10:21).

Human speech is altogether inadequate worthily to describe the rejoicings in heaven, and to set forth the full significance of these first nine verses. Verse 10 expresses the more natural emotion of one who dwells, for a little, in thought, upon these words. So ineffably beautiful and glorious is the vision, and so remarkable is it in all it suggests of the transcendent grace and loveliness, the condescension and glory of the Lamb, that no one can wonder at the transport of the Apostle, who feels a mighty impulse to fall down and worship the heavenly attendant by his side.

In the remaining verses of the Chapter (11-21), we have to do with a vision which describes the concluding part of the last Bowl, or Seventh Plague. It is the great day when Christ shall triumph over all His enemies.



Verses 11-16 are, in themselves, a most notable paragraph. The white horse, we believe, represents the rider as a Man of war, a mighty conqueror (compare 6:2).

In Chapter 16:14, 16, we were told of the mustering of the nations "unto the war of the great day of God the Almighty." In this passage we have an account of the mustering of the armies of *heaven* for the same great war.

These armies of heaven are composed of both angels and saints. Angels are specially mentioned in II Thes. 1:7 in connection with this event. They are sometimes spoken of as being clothed in white (Matt. 28:3, John 20:12), and "in pure and white linen"\* (Rev. 15:6).

"Fine linen, bright and pure," is also the heavenly raiment of the *saints* (19:8; see also 3:5, 6:11 and 7:9).

That the saints make up a goodly part of this mighty host is also clear from Rom. 16:20, where it is said, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet." This implies that the saints are to participate in the bruising. It will be with their help and under their feet. The saints are also, without doubt, included in the great first prophecy concerning the bruising of the head of the serpent by the Woman's seed (Gen. 3:15), "the seed" being understood in its comprehensive sense of *Christ—Head and Body*.

This "great day of God the Almighty" is the time for bruising Satan. This is the day Enoch foresaw

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\* The reading of the Revised "with precious stone, pure and bright," must be rejected. The textual authorities in support of it seem to us insufficient.

when he prophesied, "Behold the Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones" (Greek, "among His holy myriads"). Thus also the Psalmist makes the saints prominent among those who "execute vengeance upon the nations": "Let the saints exult in glory: Let them sing for joy upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the nations, and punishments upon the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: *This honor have all His saints*, Praise ye Jehovah" (Ps. 149: 5-9).

These armies of heaven, like their great Leader, the "Captain of the host of the Lord" (Josh. 5: 14), are all mounted on white horses, indicative of their invincible and all-conquering might.

The "great day of God the Almighty" is the day so often referred to in the Old Testament prophecies as "the day of Jehovah," or "the day of the Lord."

There are two quite different days which form the subject of so many of the utterances of the Old Testament prophets. One of these is the day or time when the enemies of Jehovah having been subdued, Israel will be in the enjoyment of the blessings of the Messianic reign. It is a day of God's peace and favor, which dawns with beauty and glory, after the tempestuous night of wrath, vengeance, and retribution to the enemies of the Lord. It is the day so often mentioned in the prophets as "that day," in such passages as Is. 11: 6-10, 12, 14: 3-7, 25: 9, Hosea, 2: 18-23, Zech. 2: 10, 11, 3: 10, 14: 20, 21, and many others.

The other one of these days, "the Day of the Lord,"

is the day, or brief period, when the fiercest judgments of God are brought upon the earth. As referred to in the prophecies of the Old Testament, it is a day of gloom and terror, a time of fearful portents in the heavens and awful commotions on the earth, when desolation and anguish will come like a flood upon Israel and Palestine. "The Day of Jehovah," or "Day of the Lord," in nearly every case, refers to this time. The following passages are characteristic descriptions of this day: "Woe unto you that desire the day of Jehovah. Wherefore would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; and (Heb., *vav*) went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?" (Amos 5:18-20). "The noise of a multitude in the mountains, as of a great people! the noise of a tumult of the kingdoms of the nations gathered together! Jehovah of hosts is mustering the host for the battle. They come from a far country, from the uttermost part of heaven, even Jehovah, and the weapons of His indignation, to destroy the whole land (or *earth*, Heb., *Arets*, the same as below, in verse 13). Wail ye; for the day of Jehovah is at hand; as destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Therefore shall all hands be feeble, and every heart of man shall melt: and they shall be dismayed; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman in travail: they shall look in amazement one at another; their faces shall be faces of flame. Behold the day of Jehovah cometh,

cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land (or *earth*) a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more rare than fine gold, even a man than the pure gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of her place, in the wrath of Jehovah of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger" (Is. 13:4-13).

Read also other vivid descriptions of it in Zeph. 1: 14-18, Joel 3:9-16, Zech. 14:1-4, Is. 17:14-16, and elsewhere. This day is also referred to by the words "in that day," in many places, as in Is. 2:10-22, 24:1-22, Ezek. 38:18-23, Zech. 12:3-9. It is the climax in "the day of vengeance of our God" mentioned in Is. 61:2.

The "Day of the Lord" and "the Day of God," in Pet. 3:10-12, has reference to a different time altogether. It is the day when the Apostate hosts are destroyed *at the end of the Millennium*, and the day when "the heavens shall be on fire," "and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned."

Objections are often made that these passages and others like them, refer, not to some day yet to come, but to events which were fulfilled centuries ago. This is to miss the whole scope and force of prophecy.

Some of these prophecies have had, indeed, a partial, or secondary fulfillment, in events which happened in the times of Old Testament history. But the primary fulfillment, the great event of which the Holy Spirit was speaking, has not yet come. Nor does it abate in the least, from the truth of this view, if it be admitted that the prophets themselves had no knowledge of this greater scope and larger fulfillment. They "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and did not always understand the full import of the prophecy (I Pet. 1: 10, 11, Dan. 12: 6-9).

The passages which have been cited as referring to "the day of Jehovah," make it clear that this is the day spoken of in Rev. 19: 11-21, when the Son of God goes forth to war, followed by the armies in heaven. Other passages supply further details of the muster of the nations, and of the places and other particulars of their destruction.

If the reader would gain a good knowledge of "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," let him read the following passages, in addition to those already cited: Is. 34: 1-8, 63: 1-6, 66: 15-17, Ezek. 38 and 39, Dan. 11: 44-12: 1, Ps. 2: 1-5, 110: 5-6.

The assembling together of the nations is at the command of the Lord (Joel 3: 9-11, Ezek. 39: 2, Zech. 14: 2).

The means which God uses in gathering them from all parts of the compass are given in Rev. 16: 13, 14. (Compare I Kgs. 22: 19-23.)

From the various Scriptures which refer to this event, it is apparent that there is more than one great battle-field to which the allied armies will be gathered.

Armageddon is generally supposed to be the place where the great battle will be fought. But although the plain and mountains of Megiddo, in southern Galilee, are a very ancient and famous battle-field, it is not expressly stated that the battle is to be fought there. The spirits of demons were sent forth to gather "the kings of the whole world" "*into the place* which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon." This may have been only the appointed rendezvous.

In Ezek. 39:2, 4, it is "upon the mountains of Israel" where they assemble and are overwhelmed. In Joel 3:12, "the Valley of Jehoshaphat" is named as the place where they gather in force. Zechariah (12:9 and 14:2) says the nations shall come against *Jerusalem*. Daniel 11:45 tells us that the King (the Antichrist) "shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain,"—that is, between the Mediterranean and Jerusalem. Isaiah 63:1-6 designates Bozrah, in the land of Edom, as the place of a mighty slaughter of the peoples. See also Is. 34:5-8.

All this is in perfect agreement with what is declared in the Apocalypse, and in many of the passages quoted, showing that in the history of the race there has been no such formidable coalition as that which is to be made by the allied kings under the supreme command of the King of Men, the Son of Perdition.

Such a mighty army would be too large and unwieldy, if gathered together for engagement on a single battle ground. And we may, therefore, believe that the several places named are, each one of them, to be the scene of a fearful slaughter.



As their objective had been the land of Israel, it is not to be doubted that the real purpose was to exterminate every worshipper of Jehovah in that land. The deep-seated, ineradicable, and bitter hatred against the Hebrew people, from the days of the Egyptian bondage even to the present moment, will finally culminate in one gigantic combination of the nations to blot out the name and remembrance of Israel from under heaven. This coalition and movement is ostensibly against Israel; but it is really against the Lord, and against Christ, His Anointed, who has loved Israel with an everlasting love (Ps. 2: 1-3).

All this is in accord with what John saw in the vision. "And I saw the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat upon the horse and against His army" (ver. 19).

It is at this time that Israel's Tribulation, or "Jacob's trouble," will culminate. Zechariah says that Jerusalem "shall be taken and the houses rifled and the women ravished, and half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." But "then," he adds, "shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when He fought in the day of battle" (Zech. 14: 2, 3).

This must be the precise moment of time of which Paul speaks, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed "from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance on them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord

Jesus, who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed in that day" (II Thes. 1:7-10).

The overthrow of all the allied armies is complete (ver. 21). Not one of them escapes; for in Zech. 12:9 the Lord says, that in that day, He "will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." This does not mean that the Lord will then *try*, or *attempt*, "to destroy all the nations that come against Israel." The meaning is quite otherwise. He says that in that day He will *hunt*, or *make search for* them all, in order to destroy them—every one. The allied kings and all the captains and mighty men are slain "with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of His mouth," and their flesh was fed upon by "all the birds that fly in mid heaven" (vers. 17, 18, 21). The Man of Sin and the False Prophet were not slain, but were taken and "cast *alive* into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone" (ver. 20). Thus the pre-eminence in sin of these two is rewarded by their being cast *soul and body* into the fires of hell a thousand years before resurrection to judgment and doom overtakes the rest of the ungodly (20: 5, 11-15).

There is, however, a brighter and more glorious ending to that day of vengeance. It is in the time of Christ's intervention in behalf of Israel, that He is revealed to them as their Messiah. On this occasion there shall be poured "upon the house of David and

upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12: 10). Their conversion will be sudden, like that of Paul outside the gate of Damascus, when Christ revealed Himself to him; for Isaiah is speaking also of this same hour when he says: "and He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations" \* \* \* \* \* "and it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is Jehovah: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Is. 25: 7, 9).

After all these occurrences, we may know that the survivors of the human race on the earth will be few indeed. To begin with, there will be a remnant of Israel that escapes. Zech. 13: 8, 9, informs us that "in all the land \* \* \* \* \* two parts therein shall be cut off and die: but the third part shall be left therein" \* As to the other nations, let us remember that during the comparatively brief period of time covered by the Tribulation, there have been destructive judgments which "carried them away as with a flood" (Ps. 90: 5). The opening of the Second Seal brought universal wars, which must have been exceedingly fatal. Then came famine, pestilence, and other plagues that carried off "a fourth part of the earth" (6: 8). This must mean "a fourth part" of its *inhabitants*.

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\* If we take the word *Kal-HaArets* here, in the sense of "all the *land*," that is, "Palestine," instead of "all the *earth*," it would indicate the proportion of Jews in Palestine to survive the Tribulation, who are converted and make confession, not *during* the Tribulation, but *after* it, or at its very close.

During the sounding of the Trumpets there was also great mortality. In the Sixth one of these, a "third part" of the race were killed (9: 15, 18).

Then again the great multitudes of martyrs and living saints should be mentioned, who, as we have seen, were caught up to God in three successive raptures.

Later on, during the Seventh Plague, those who belonged to "Babylon the Great," the Apostate Church, were utterly destroyed by the Beast and his subjects. And, finally, these others who composed the allied armies were destroyed in one awful and supernatural overthrow. Surely the earth must then be left with but very few inhabitants. And so, indeed, the Word of God expressly informs us. More than twenty-five hundred years ago, God spoke through His prophet of this very result in these words: "The earth shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled, for Jehovah hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the lofty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men left" (Is. 24: 3-6). Does any one say that these words refer only to Jerusalem and Judah's captivity in the time of Nebuchadnezzar? Let him read on a little further to the thirteenth verse, where God seems to have anticipated just such an objection as this: "For thus shall it be in the

midst of the earth, *among the peoples*, as the shaking of an olive tree, as the grape gleanings when the Vintage is done." And so also the remaining verses of that chapter, testify that these things are spoken concerning the whole earth, and not of Palestine in particular. Read carefully also the further strong testimony on this point in Jer. 25: 15-33.

## CHAPTER XX.

WHEN the time comes for Satan's binding it will not require a battalion of angels to do it. One angel is enough. And he is not described as "a mighty angel," as was the case in 10:1 and 18:21. Compare also 18:1. This angel was able, single-handed, to lay hold of Satan, bind him, and cast him into the abyss. Satan's power is gone. All his power and authority has been given him by God. Any moment God desires to do it, He can strip him of it all, and leave him as helpless as a babe. The time when this happens is when Christ comes in His Kingdom.

The Beast and the False Prophet "were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." But the place into which Satan is cast is the *abyss*,—a very different place.

From this passage, and from Rev. 9:1, 2, and Luke 8:31, it is apparent that the abyss is not *hell*, unless it be supposed that hell is a term comprehensive enough to include both the *lake of fire* and the *abyss*. By "abyss" we understand a place of imprisonment and torment for wicked spirits. In Luke's account of the healing of the man who was possessed of a legion of demons, it is said that the demons entreated Christ that He would not command them to depart into the *abyss*. Mark says that the demons solemnly implored Jesus not to *torment them*. Matthew says they put



the question to Him, "*Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*"

These three accounts taken together, make it clear that the demons were fearful lest Jesus should send them immediately into the abyss, the prison-house of torment. That they expect to be sent there eventually, is also manifest from the words "*before the time.*" But they knew that the time when Satan and his subjects would be sent there for confinement and torment was yet in the future, possibly a long time off. Their fear seems to have been lest they should be sent there before the rest.

In the vision of John nothing is said of the casting into the abyss of any other than Satan. This is not to be understood as implying that his angels and all his spirit-subjects were not made to follow him into the same place. It should be taken for granted that they will thus accompany him. Certain it is, the other wicked angels and unclean spirits, or demons, will not be left at large during the period of the Millennium, which begins at the time when Satan is bound; for the passages just referred to speak of a time when the evil spirits will be incarcerated in the abyss. The time of such incarceration must be at this point, for in all that the Scriptures have to say concerning the Millennial reign of Christ, it is assumed that there will then be no tempter, no deceiver—nothing to hurt or destroy in the earth (Is. 11:1-10, Num. 14:21, Is. 65:19-25).

The duration of Satan's imprisonment will be one thousand years.

Division 3.

Part II.

(Chap. 20:4-15.)

## THE MILLENNIUM.

The meaning of verse 4 is not difficult or uncertain. Those who sit upon thrones are specified elsewhere in Scripture as:

First. God the Father (Rev. 3:21).

Second. Christ (Dan. 7:9, Rev. 3:21).

Third. The Apostles (Matt. 19:28).

Fourth. The Saints (Dan. 7:27, Rev. 3:21, 4:4; Compare I Cor. 6:2).

In the passage before us, it is clearly indicated that among the occupants of these thrones are "the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand." This description is evidently given to identify them with the souls underneath the altar in 6:9, and with the other saints of the Tribulation mentioned in 13:7, 15, 15:2, 16:6. It is further said of them that "they lived" (ἐζησαν). These words can be explained only as having special reference to their *bodies*, and as meaning that those who had been mentioned as "souls" are now in possession of resurrection bodies.

In 4:4 the saints taken up in the Pre-Tribulation rapture are shown to be already invested with royal power, being seated on thrones and wearing crowns of gold. The question would then arise, "What about those who come off victorious afterwards, during the Tribulation? What are *they* to receive, and how are they related to the others?" This passage gives us

the desired information. These, too, are kings and priests unto God and Christ. They sit on *thrones*. "Judgment is give unto them." They are to exercise the prerogatives of kingship, like the saints that preceded them. What more clear and conclusive proof could be needed that the Tribulation saints do not belong to an order of the redeemed separate from the other saints, and that they are also, *all of them*, members of His Body,—the Church. It would almost seem that the Lord had given a special word at this point, to prevent or correct the wrong views which many have in the present day, as to the status of the Tribulation saints.

It is further stated that these saints are to reign with Christ a thousand years. In verse 6 it is again declared "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him the thousand years." These passages are our authority for the Millennium, or Thousand Years' Reign of Christ on the earth. Many are disposed to regard the Millennium as a poetic dream that will never be realized. But nothing in the whole Word of God is announced with more clearness and definiteness than this. Others are unwilling to accept the teachings of this chapter concerning the Millennium, for the reason that nowhere else in the Bible is there mention of any such period. Indeed! How do we know any fact of revelation? because of its oft reiteration? Certainly not, but because it is the declaration of a God who is "infinite, eternal, and unchangeable" in His TRUTH. That being the case, a single declaration would be sufficient. Where else in the whole range of Old Testament prophecy besides

Is. 53 is it declared that the Messiah would be "led as a lamb to the slaughter"? How many times was it prophesied concerning His Virgin-birth? that it was to be in Bethlehem? that He would enter Jerusalem riding upon an ass' colt? that He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver? that He would receive gall and vinegar for drink? that His hands and His feet were to be pierced? that His garments would be parted by lot? that He would be numbered among the transgressors? that He would not see corruption? Of these, and many other facts concerning our Lord, there was but a single prophecy in each case. And yet every one of them was fulfilled with most careful precision. But in regard to the period of Satan's binding, we are told no less than three times in this chapter that it shall be for one thousand years. So also the thousand years during which Christ is to reign, with the saints, is thrice mentioned in the same passage. Thus the Thousand Years period is here mentioned no less than six times. It is not to be understood that the reign of the saints with Christ is to be limited to one thousand years; for in 22: 5 it is said, "they shall reign *unto the ages of the ages*," i. e., through all eternity. According to the best Manuscript authority, verse 6 should read "and they shall reign with Him *the thousand years*" (τὰ χίλια ἔτη), which is a declaration that their long reign will date from the very *beginning* of the Millennium.

"The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished." These are the unrighteous dead. There is here the most perfect definiteness. No

declaration could be more clear to show that the unrighteous dead will not be raised until the end of the Millennium. Hence all that is declared in burial forms and elsewhere, with regard to "the general resurrection," is incorrect and unscriptural. The last part of verse 5, "this is the first resurrection," has been wrongly understood by many as implying that the resurrection of the dead in Christ would be comprised in a single event. It teaches rather that *the first resurrection is to include all who rise before the Thousand Years begin*. These, we have seen, will rise from the dead (or be caught up without dying) at several different times. It is probable that those who "have part in the first resurrection" are they who constitute "THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN" (literally, *of first-borns*, or *first-born ones*, Heb. 12:23). The first resurrection is spoken of elsewhere as "the resurrection of life," in distinction from "the resurrection of judgment," which is synonymous with the resurrection at the end of the Thousand Years (Jno. 5:29).

Contrary to the view held by many, the present passage is not the only one in the Bible on which the belief in a prior, or first, resurrection rests. The New Testament teaching elsewhere is so definite and clear in regard to it that it might be said not to need the support of this passage, nor even of the other numerous witnesses to it in the Apocalypse. There are forty-eight places in the New Testament which speak of the resurrection as being a resurrection or rising "FROM the dead." This is not the same, in meaning, as the words "the resurrection, or rising OF the

dead." Rising *from* the dead implies the rising of some and *their coming out from among other dead ones*, who do not rise. The term "the dead," in the Greek, is always in the *plural*. It is never equivalent to "*the grave*," nor to "*death*." It means *dead ones*, *dead bodies*. The vast difference between the expressions "resurrection FROM the dead" and "resurrection OF the dead" may be seen by turning to Luke 20:35 and Phil. 3:11 (R. V.). See also Mark 9:9, 10. Luke 20:35 speaks of a resurrection of some who "shall be accounted worthy," implying that others will be found *unworthy* to attain unto it. Phil. 3:11 speaks of a *special*, or privileged, resurrection ( εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν ), to the attainment of which Paul considered it worth while to make everything bend, as the preceding verses show. See also Luke 14:14, where this "better resurrection" is mentioned (Heb. 11:35).

Very little information is given in the Apocalypse concerning the course of events during the Millennium. It does not seem to have been the purpose of the Holy Spirit to go into that subject here in detail; and this, for the reason that so much information in regard to it has been given in the Psalms and prophetic books of the Old Testament.

From the present chapter we learn that Satan will not be at liberty to deceive mankind during the Thousand Years, and that the saints are to reign with Christ in kingly and priestly authority and glory throughout that period. Chapter 5:10 informs us that the sphere of their dominion will be *upon the earth*,



and 2:26, 27, adds that their rule is to be *over the nations*.

The amount of information concerning the Millennial age which we get from the Old Testament is not small. But it is of the *inhabitants of the earth*, and of *terrestrial conditions*, rather than of the reigning saints, that they are chiefly speaking.

Most of the passages cited below from the prophetic books, refer, in particular, to the Hebrews, and the blessings to be enjoyed by Israel in "the age to come," under the personal reign of Christ, when Israel will again enjoy the position of headship among the nations.

In the beginning of this period will take place the gathering of Israel from all the countries of the earth, and bringing them back to their own land. Of this restoration the following passages speak most clearly: Is. 11:11-16, 49:3-23, 60, Jer. 16:14-16, 23:3-8, 31:1-14, Ezek. 34:11-16, 23-31, 36:6-12, 24-28, 37:21-28.

Aside from these passages which refer to God's blessing to Israel in connection with their *restoration*, there are many others which speak of the exceeding *fulness of blessing* with which they will be visited in the days of which we speak. Among these are Is. 4:2-6, 9:6, 7, XII, 30:19-26, XXXV, LXI, LXII, 65:19-25, Hos. 2:16-23, 14:4-8, Amos 9:11-15, Zech. 2:10-13. But in several of these passages there are also intimations that *all the nations* are to participate in the enjoyment of this universal reign of peace and righteousness.

There are, however, many other passages which

speak with yet more clear and positive testimony of *a world-wide blessedness* during those happy days. Among those which may be cited are Num. 14:21, Ps. 67, 72, 85:8-13, 96:10-13, Is. 11:4-10, Mic. 4:1-4, Hab. 2:14, Zech. 8:20-23.

The general character of the Millennium is best indicated in two passages in the New Testament. In Acts 3:21, it is referred to as "*the times of restoration.*" These times will follow immediately upon the return of Christ, "whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets that have been from of old." In Matt. 19:28, this time is spoken of as "*the regeneration.*" In the parallel passages in Mark 10:28-30 and Luke 18:28-30, it is called "*the Age to come.*"

But the fuller and more detailed information concerning Millennial conditions is derived from prophecies in the Old Testament. No poetic dream of man can compare for beauty with the description we there find of it. Let us not, after the manner of some, "spiritualize" these wonderful declarations and promises, until nothing of them is left but poetic fancy.

Among the prominent characteristics of "the Age to come," the following may be mentioned:

1. During the Millennium, the earth will be blessed by the personal reign and presence of Christ. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah. And many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of

hosts hath sent me unto thee" (Zech. 2:10, 11). See also Is. 12:6, Ezek. 37:26-28 and Zech. 8:3.

2. Righteousness will then prevail everywhere upon the earth. "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Is. 61:11). "Then justice shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever" (Is. 32:16, 17).

3. During the golden "Age to come," there will be universal peace under the personal reign of the Prince of Peace. Man's entire being, physical, intellectual and moral, having been restored to something like its original condition in Eden, and having been brought into obedience to "the God of Peace," there will then be wanting all those things that now move us to break the peace. Of those happy days it is written, "They shall see, eye to eye, when Jehovah returneth to Zion" (Is. 52:8). "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord'; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah" (Jer. 31:34). "And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah, and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee" (Is. 54:13, 14). "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks:

nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Is. 2:4).

4. Length of days and exemption from sickness will also characterize the times of which we are speaking. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Is. 65:20-22). "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing" (Is. 35:5, 6). "And the inhabitant shall not say, 'I am sick'" (Is. 33:24).

5. The brute creation will also share in the blessedness of those glorious times. Wild beasts will lose their ferocity; venomous serpents and insects will cease to be a scourge and a terror to the dwellers on the earth. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the

earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:6-9).

6. After the fall of our first parents, a curse was pronounced upon the ground, in consequence of which it brings forth thorns and thistles and noxious plants. But in "the regeneration," the vegetable world, like the animal kingdom, "will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). "Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt" (Amos 9:13). "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Is. 55:12, 13). See also Ps. 72:16, Is. 35:1, 2, Ezek. 36:29, 30, 35.

7. For many years after the Flood, "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech" (Gen. 11:1). Then came the confounding of tongues at Babel, which God sent upon the race for its rebellion and wickedness.

Already the Bible has been translated into more than four hundred languages and dialects. But this inconvenient and embarrassing confusion of speech will not always continue. Among the many blessed changes to be brought in, in "the times of restoration of all

things," will be a universal language that will take the place of the present Babel of tongues. The few Christians in Jerusalem upon whom the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, were endued with the temporary gift of tongues. But Pentecost was only the beginning,—merely an earnest of the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2. The great and complete fulfillment of that prophecy belongs to "the times of restoration." The miraculous gift of tongues, on the day of Pentecost, was but an adumbration, or prophecy, of the greater and more glorious change when the Spirit will be poured out "upon *all flesh*,"—when Babel will be reversed, and the whole earth will again be "of one language and of one speech." Is not this the meaning of the prophecy in Zeph. 3:9? "Then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve Him with one consent." Notice particularly the close connection between this prophecy and verse 8, and also with the following verses of the chapter. This would seem to imply that the speech of men in Millennial times will not be one of the languages now spoken, but one altogether new, and, better still, one that is superior to any now in use, in this respect, that it will be "a *pure* language."

Without any question, all of the passages just quoted refer especially to Millennial times. Some of them speak, in particular, of blessings to come upon *Israel* and their land, in the coming days. For this reason there may be some who will question our right to extend their application to *all of earth's nations*. We are confident, however, that we are easily within



our Scriptural rights; for Israel's blessings have ever been given with the end in view of their reaching unto all nations. Israel will, indeed, enjoy a priority among, and headship over the nations, after "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," but the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob run thus: "In thee and in thy seed shall *all the families of the earth* be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, 22:18, 26:4 and 28:14); and not less so will it be in "the Age to come": "For if the casting away of them (Israel) is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead" (Rom. 11:15)?

It is nowhere the teaching of Scripture that there will be no sin,—no resistance to the will of God,—during the Millennium. Satan will be absent from the world, and all his subordinates. There will be no temptation from that source. During that age, however, mankind will pass through a time of testing unlike anything it has known before. How will it stand the test? There will be sinners among men during those days. Is. 65:20 speaks of such. So also Ps. 66:3, 81:15 (margin), and other similar passages, seem without doubt to indicate that during this age there will be many who will yield only a *feigned obedience* to Christ. While there is no outward resistance to His government, their service will be involuntary. Their obedience will spring from a sense of compulsion and fear. They will not dare openly to transgress, because disobedience will not be tolerated. Evil doers will be dealt with summarily. "Morning by morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land;

to cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah" (Ps. 101:8).

Although the reign of Christ will be in absolute righteousness, and there will be no cause for dissatisfaction with His government of the world, the result of the test will be to prove to all succeeding ages, that "it is good that the heart be established *by grace*" (Heb. 13:9). For this dispensation also, like the other six, is to close with a great apostacy. At the end of the Thousand Years, Satan will be loosed again. This is as certain as the Word of God (vers. 3, 7-9). Nothing is stated concerning the liberation at this time of Satan's archangels, angels, and demons. But we may infer that these will also be loosed at the same time. Such a sudden and universal apostacy we can scarcely deem possible, without the aid of myriads of wicked spirits. For mighty as Satan is, in his abuse of God-given power, he is not, like God, *omnipresent*. God will give him a brief season in which "to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth."

The natural heart of man will not have changed its nature during the thousand years of Christ's blessed and beneficent reign in absolute righteousness. No sooner will the Devil be set at liberty, than he will find multitudes ready to listen to him. This apostacy develops with amazing swiftness. They gather themselves together "as the sand of the sea," and under Satan's command "they compass the camp of the saints about and the beloved city Jerusalem." What supreme folly! After all that the previous dispensations will have taught of the utter futility of rebellion against

the holy and Almighty God, they remain unconvinced. The result is sudden and awful destruction, and the doom of the lake of fire. The evolutionist gets little support or comfort from this occurrence. A thousand years in such an ideal environment will fail to "develop" man so that his heart becomes perfect and inclined toward God, *by nature*. Thus man will have proved himself a failure in every age, or dispensation of the world, and under the most favorable conditions. Of these Dispensations, there are seven:

The first dispensation: In Paradise—From the Creation to the Fall of Man, ending with his expulsion from Eden.

The second dispensation: From Eden to Noah, ending with the Flood.

The third dispensation: From the Deluge to the Call of Abraham, ending with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The fourth dispensation: From Abraham to the Exodus, ending with the plagues of Egypt and the Red Sea.

The fifth dispensation: From Moses to Christ, ending with the Crucifixion of our Lord, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Dispersion of the Jews.

The sixth dispensation: From Pentecost to the Millennium, ending with the Apostacy, the reign of the Antichrist and the terrible judgments of the "great Tribulation."

The seventh dispensation: The Millennium, ending with the revolt against the reign of Christ, and its result as told in 20:9, 10.

In each one of these seven periods, or dispensations, man will have demonstrated that "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23), and that without the sustaining power of God he would always fail, even under the most advantageous circumstances.

Another truth brought out by this release of Satan must not go unnoticed. It is here perfectly demonstrated that punishment and suffering have no power to change rebellious hearts. It is the belief of not a few that the sufferings of the unsaved in the world to come, will, in time, purge away all their sins, atone for all their rebellion, and give them the spirit of repentance and submission to God. Hence it is said the punishments inflicted will be only temporary, since all will thereby be brought to repentance. Nay, it is even asserted that the torments of hell will so change the nature of Satan himself that he also will eventually be delivered from the lake of fire! How unscriptural and vain does all such reasoning appear in the light of this prophecy in verses 7-10. Satan will still be Satan after the thousand years of imprisonment and torment. He remains unchanged by all his sufferings. There is still all the old-time malignity of heart toward God, the same unquenchable hatred of God's people. Nor does the inspired word give any ground for the belief that in the ages which succeed the Millennium, Satan will ever find a brief release or respite from the fearful doom which he has so fully merited. For it is declared in verse 10, "and the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and

they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Greek, "unto the ages of the ages").

The Judgment of the Great White Throne presents a scene solemn and awful. The majesty of the description accords well with the occasion. The whiteness of the throne is indicative of the absolute justice of the decisions to be rendered from it. The one "that sat upon it" is the Lord Jesus Christ. We know this to be the case from John 5:22, 27, where it is said, "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath given all judgment unto the Son \* \* \* \* \* and He gave Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man." And we know further, from Acts 17:31 and Matthew 25:31, that judgment is the special prerogative of the Son. As we shall presently see, this occasion is the same as that mentioned in Matt. 25:31, 32, where this throne is called "the throne of His glory." Those standing before the throne for judgment are they who were referred to in verse 13, as not having "part in the first resurrection." Before this great judgment begins all the remaining dead are raised. "Resurrection" and "rising again" are terms which refer only to the *body*. The impression is quite common that the resurrection is a change affecting the *soul*, or *spirit*, of man, alone, and that when one is raised he comes forth *without a body*, without *corporeity*. This is a gross error. The resurrection concerns particularly the *BODY*. It is the *body* that is raised, not the soul. During all the years while the body has been in the grave, the soul has been elsewhere and in a state of conscious activity. See Luke 16:19-31. But in the resurrection,

body and soul are reunited. We know this to be the case from what the Scriptures say concerning our Lord's resurrection, and from II Cor. 5:2-4.

"The sea gave up the dead that were in it: and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them." The meaning of these words, we think, is this: sea and land gave up the *bodies* of the dead that were reposing in them, and Hades, the abode of departed spirits, surrendered the bodies that were in it.\* Nothing is here affirmed with regard to their souls; for nothing needed to be said. We know that it was with body and soul reunited that all the remaining dead stood before the Great White Throne. This is "the resurrection of judgment." See Jno. 5:29.

That all in this vast assemblage are not subjects of reprobation is clear from the fact that there was a Book of Life, in which the names of some were recorded. But of all these it is said, "they were judged every man according to their works." Those who had fallen asleep in Christ, and all who were "*in Christ*" at each one of the raptures, are not among this number, for it is said of such, "They shall not come into judgment" (Jno. 5:24, R. V.). They have now already been reigning with Christ a thousand years. Consequently, for them, there can be no judicial trial to undergo. They are dealt with on a very different basis from the rest,—on the basis of *faith*. But here it is declared that the sons of the second resurrection are to be dealt with on the ground of their *conduct*—"every man *according to their works*." There are many who reject God's first and preferred

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\* See Appendix E.



method of dealing with men, viz., "the righteousness which is of faith" (Rom. 9:30, 10:6), or, as it is still better named in Rom. 1:17 and 3:21, "THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD." They prefer *their own righteousness* (Rom. 10:3), and wish to stand on their own *merit*, their own *character*. These shall, indeed, be dealt with on their own terms, but not immediately, however. They must wait a thousand years, till the close of the Millennium, before they are raised and their case comes up for trial. And when they are raised, it will be to stand before the Great White Throne, to be judged according to *their* works, not according to *Christ's* works, which is the ground of the believers' confidence. They cannot plead His atoning blood. They must stand on their own record. And what the record is will be revealed by the books.

But how different the case will be with those who accept God's terms, and choose to stand on *Christ's record*! These shall be raised a thousand years in advance. Nor will they undergo a trial for their life. They will see their case *nonsuited*—dismissed without trial; because Christ has already been tried in their stead, and suffered the full penalty that was due them. Then will be confirmed unto them by an eternal decree the gift of everlasting life as an immediate possession, together with the throne and crown of kingship and joint-sovereignty with Christ.

"And the books were opened." No Advocate, no Daysman, now steps forward and pleads in behalf of these and secures a dismissal of the case. The question is "what has the *record* been"? "And the dead were judged out of the things which were written in

the books, according to their works." Does this mean that all the acts of a man's life will then be made public? What a fearful thought! How the poor sinner will quake with fear! His fairest deeds on which he has hitherto prided himself will then turn to fierce and burning accusations. This is so different from the believer's expectation, which is "*no trial.*"

"And another book was opened." God be praised there is another book to be opened—the "Book of Life." But nothing is here revealed to enable us to determine what names are recorded in this "Book of Life." Is there not in these words ground for hope and belief that, among the pagan nations of the world, there have been those who, having longed for the light, and having groped for it without ever discovering it, will in that great day find their names written in the Book of Life? Their works were not evil in the sight of men. Nor had they ever rejected "the testimony of Jesus." Surely it is the plain teaching of God's Spirit in this passage that there will be those in the second resurrection who will "awake to everlasting life."

The case will be very different, however, with those who, in confidence in their own righteousness, have refused to submit themselves to the righteousness of God. For with regard to such, the declaration of the Word is clear and decisive—"He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jno. 3:36). Unbelief, hardening the heart, refusal to hearken, grieving the Spirit, are *works*, as truly as murder, theft, and perjury are *works*. Rejection of Christ and refusal of His testimony are

"deeds done in the body." "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (Jno. 6:29). Faith is a *work*. Unbelief, therefore, is also a work. And these will count for more when the books are opened than many a deed that looms up great in the eyes of men.

The doom awaiting every one whose name is not found written in the Book of Life is to be cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, from which there will be no resurrection. The *first* death is a death from which great multitudes will have a blessed release. God has promised it. He has declared, "I will ransom them from the power of Sheol (Hades), I will redeem them from death" (Hos. 13:14). But everything here and elsewhere in Scripture utters its solemn warning against indulging in any hope of ransom from the power of the *second* death,—*"the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone"* (21:8).

"And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." Death and Hades are here personified, as in Hos. 13:14. Scripture represents them both as hostile to the Church of Christ, and enemies of men (Matt. 16:18, I Cor. 15:55, Prov. 7:26, 27), and as part of the great system of evil which came through sin and the author of sin. But now when Christ shall have triumphed over all His enemies, and there will be from thenceforth *"new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness,"* there will no longer be any need of these prison-houses for the incarceration of the bodies and souls of transgressors. Hence it is said that Death and Hades are also cast into the same lake of fire.

In view of all that is so clearly stated, or implied, in these few verses which describe the Great Judgment at the end of the Thousand Years, we think there is sufficient reason to identify it with the one described in Matt. 25: 31-46.

But in the opinion of many, the Judgment spoken of in Matt. 25: 31-46 belongs to the time of Christ's Second Coming, *before* the Millennium. According to this view, the nations gathered before Christ, for judgment, are the *Gentile nations then living on the earth*; and the issues of that judgment are to be determined by the treatment each one has shown toward the *Hebrews*, whom the King calls "my brethren."

Several considerations seem to militate against this view:

First. The teaching of the Apocalypse is clear that "the resurrection of judgment" does not take place, and cannot take place, until *after* the Thousand Years. The subjects of the first resurrection are dealt with *solely in grace, on the basis of faith*,—without trial. "They shall not come into judgment" ( *Κρίσις* Jno. 5:24). Their case has already been decided. There is no further question to be settled as to their right to eternal life. "Over these the second death hath no power" (20:6). The judgment of Matthew 25, on the contrary, is plainly one that proceeds, not on the basis of *faith*, but of *conduct*. The question of their salvation depends on what their *works* have been. A judgment of the living nations on the same basis would, therefore, seem to be out of place before the end of the Millennium, the time when "the rest of the dead" are to have their trial.

Second. There is nothing in Matthew 25, nor elsewhere, to indicate that "the nations" gathered for judgment are then *living on the earth*; for, (a.) Nowhere in Scripture is it shown that there is to be such a gathering of the living nations. For we cannot agree with those who hold that the gathering of the nations spoken of in Joel 3:9-16 is for this judgment. It refers most definitely, we believe, to the great coalition of "the Kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army" (19:19); (b.) On the other hand, there are many passages which wholly preclude the thought of such a universal assembling of earth's inhabitants. We refer to passages like Is. 60, Mic. 4:1-3, and others, which speak of the restoration of Israel to their own land, and of the other nations going up to Jerusalem after the beginning of the Millennial reign. In such passages, the going up to Jerusalem, which is such a prominent feature, is not to *judgment*, but in order to worship the Lord and learn His ways; to bring the sons of Israel again into their own land; and to bring rich offerings to God from all parts of the earth.

Third. Nor is there any reason to make "the nations" to refer exclusively to the GENTILES, while making "my brethren" refer to *Israel* alone. Israel was also a *nation* ( ἔθνος ). See Luke 7:5, Jno. 11:48, 50, 51, 52, Acts 24:10, 17, 26:4. "All the nations" mentioned in Matt. 25:32 are to be understood in the light of Rev. 20:12, as meaning "the dead, the great and the small," from all parts of the world, and of all the centuries in human history. They

are the resurrected dead of the Post-Millennial resurrection.

Fourth. Of all mankind, the Beast and the False Prophet are the only ones who "go into Perdition" *without dying*. "They two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." "But *the rest were killed* with the sword, of Him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of His mouth" (19: 20, 21). It is not to be assumed that those addressed in Matthew 25: 41 are exceptions to the rule, as would be the case if they were taken from the *living* nations, and were sent to their doom *without dying*. This makes it all the more certain that both passages are speaking of the same event.

Coincident, we believe, with the destruction of the last apostates and the judgment scene in heaven just spoken of, there was another event taking place on the earth and in the lower heavens of which we have but a hint given us in this chapter. In verse 9, we are told that the means by which the Apostate hosts were overthrown was the "fire" that "came down out of heaven and devoured them." Also in verse 11 it is said that from the face of Him that sat upon the throne, "the earth and the heavens fled away and there was found no place for them."

This is all that is said in the Apocalypse concerning the great event out of which is to issue the "new heaven" and the "new earth" of 21: 1. It has already been observed that the book of Revelation does not give an account of events which are foretold in other books of the Sacred Word. It may be said merely to supply the data, or information, by means of which



we are to know just *where* in the course of events the things prophesied belong. Here is a case in point. The three passages just referred to furnish all the information necessary to make it certain that it is at this precise point of time that the new creation will take place of which the Scriptures speak. In Is. 65:17 God had said, "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth." See also Ps. 102:26 and Is. 51:6. Our Lord had said that "heaven and earth shall pass away" (Matt. 24:35). But it is in II Pet. 3 that the fullest account is given: "The heavens that now are (that is, the *created* heavens) and the earth \* \* \* \* \* have been stored up for fire (marg. or "*with fire*"), being reserved against (*unto*) the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Many however, because of the long postponement of its fulfillment, the Apostle says, will question the truth of the prophecy. "But," he continues, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief: in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and *hastening* (so the Greek) the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Pet. 3:7, 10-13).

By the words "burned up" we are not to under-

stand that the world is to be utterly destroyed or annihilated. This is not the meaning. It speaks of such a burning as gold and silver are subjected to, for the purpose of destroying the dross and refining the metal.

Ages ago—we do not know how far back—sin and death entered the created universe. There are evidences, both in the world and in the Scriptures, that long before the Fall of Adam the whole creation became involved in some fearful ruin through Satan's agency. And from that time to the present, it "groaneth and travaileth in pain together with the sons of God," and waits in eager expectation for the day when "the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:20-22).

That the creation will enjoy a partial deliverance "from the bondage of corruption" during the Millennium is plainly revealed in the Word. See Is. 11:6-9, 30:23-26, 32:15, 16, 35:1-2, 65:25, and other passages; but the full and perfect deliverance of the created world will not come till after the apostacy at the close of the Millennium. It will not be sufficient merely to remove Satan and all the workers of iniquity out of the world. That was the condition during the Thousand Years. There is to be something immeasurably better than that. There are now, and there will be till the end of the Millennium, countless monuments in the world, abiding signs and reminders of the mischief that has been wrought, and the evil that has been suffered, under the reign of the Evil One. The universe is full of ruins, from the starry worlds to the rocky foundations of the earth. The

world is a great cemetery. The strata of the earth are a vast library, the pages of which are a record of suffering and death. "The trail of the Serpent is over them all." It is God's purpose to give His people "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," in which no sign or trace shall be left to tell of the ruin wrought by Satan's fall and "man's first disobedience."

Water cannot wash away the stain and scars of sin. Nothing but the refining fires of the "day of God" will be able to cleanse "the earth and the works that are therein." Out of those purifying fires, the earth will emerge without a trace of the old taint, ready for the creating hand of Him who said "Behold I make all things new." This new creation could not take place before the close of the Millennium, because the earth will not till then be wholly delivered from all possibility of future defilement. Thus it will be seen that the time of this deliverance could not come until after the final apostacy recorded in this chapter.

A vast multitude of earth's inhabitants, no doubt, will remain faithful to Christ in the days of the Post-Millennial Apostacy. The question therefore naturally arises, what is to become of these? Are they to be taken up to God, or are they to continue to live upon the earth? We know from 21:3, 24, 26 and 22:2 that the race will continue to dwell on the earth after its re-creation, and during the ages to come.

The Word of God never speaks of "the end of the *world*." Imperfect translations, however, make it *seem* to speak of such an event. Wherever these words are found in the Old Testament, they are

equivalent to "the end, or ends of the *earth*," denoting extent, or universality. But wherever this expression occurs in the New Testament, "world" is a translation of the Greek *αἰών* (Eng., *Eon*, or *Aeon*), which is wholly a *time* word. It is better translated *age*, and should be so rendered in all such passages.

If, then, the present race of men is to be found on the earth after the Millennial Age, the question will be asked, how can they survive the terrible fires through which this globe is to pass, when "the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned" (II Pet. 3:10)? From such a world-encircling catastrophe God is able to protect His people. "Is anything too hard for me?" He asks (Jer. 32:27). We know how He kept Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in the burning, fiery furnace (Dan. 3:). That He will shield His people in "the day of God," we are perfectly sure. Of this also He has given a promise; for Is. 26:20, 21, seems clearly to refer to this particular event: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, Jehovah cometh forth out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

## CHAPTER XXI.

Division 3.                      Part III.                      (Chap. 21 : 1-22 : 5).

## AFTER THE MILLENNIUM.

WE now come to another natural division in this book. In verse 1, the new creation of which we have been speaking is seen to have been already accomplished. From henceforth we seem to be moving in a different world, and to breathe the air of a celestial country,—the very Paradise of God. It is a *new* world, not the old world patched up to look like new. And yet it is the same, in the sense that a beautiful vessel of the purest gold is the same metal that it was before it was put into the furnace of the refiner to separate from it the baser metals and other impurities with which it had been mixed. It is now the abode of righteousness. Not that righteousness is the predominant feature of the New Earth, while weakness, imperfection, and sin are present in trifling and insignificant proportions. From now on, there is neither vestige nor trace of sin, nor imperfection of any kind.

The section now before us treats of but one period, —THE POST-MILLENNIAL AGES. Beginning with the new creation as its starting point, it reaches out into the measureless expanse of eternity. Imagination fails utterly to bridge this expanse. In the Greek Testament there is an expression, “UNTO

THE AGES OF THE AGES," which better than anything else assists one to realize something of the awful immensity of the idea of ETERNITY—the infinity of duration. This expression is found twenty-one times in the New Testament, thirteen of which are in the Apocalypse. "Unto the ages of the ages" is a term of far greater sublimity and more stupendous import than our word "for ever and ever." An AGE ( αἰών ) is a period of time of uncertain limit. In the Scriptures, the most clearly defined portion of time covered by the term "age" seems to embrace the entire period of the world, from the fall of man to the Second Coming of Christ—the period during which "the god of this age" is in possession of "the kingdom of the world." See II Cor. 4:4, Gal. 1:4, Mark 10:30, Luke 20:34, 35, Eph. 1:21. In all these passages, read "age" instead of "world."

An age is thus seen to be a long period of time measured by *years*. An Age of Ages, then, would be an age made up of *ages*, as the units of time, instead of *years*. Imagination falls back exhausted in its vain attempt to measure the expanse of a single Age of Ages. But the Bible term for eternity is "the AGES of the ages."

It is of ETERNITY that this Section of the book is speaking. A seemingly marvellous fact about it is that so few verses are devoted to a subject of such infinite reach. Our voluminous histories are but little more than a record of events directly or indirectly resulting from sin, and from the work of Satan in "this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4). In the Ages succeeding the Millennium, there will be no wars to



chronicle, no crimes, no calamities, no deaths, no sorrow, nor other evil of any kind to record. For "the first things are passed away," and all things will have been made new. It is also written of that day that "God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more." The earth will no longer be cursed by the presence and works of evil doers. "For the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars," shall be *without*, "in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Gone then, forever, are all "the makers of history," and they may well be spared.

Aside from the description of the Holy City, there is very little that is symbolic in this Section (Part 3).

It has been wrongly supposed by some, that after speaking, in the first eight verses of Chapter 21, of the Post-Millennial Ages, the inspired writer returns in verse 9 to the Millennial Age, and from thence on, to 22: 5, is picturing the glories of that period. It is difficult to find anything in the whole passage to indicate such an extraordinary reversion to a previous age. Had there been such a remarkable leap backward, there would have been some sign-post to indicate it. In verse 1 we had a most definite guide-board to mark the beginning of the new Section: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." The period is therefore the same throughout. Such a recurrence to a former age is also against every precedent. The Holy Spirit treats of each epoch distinctly, by itself, and never mixes them. They do not overlap. The transi-

tion from one to the other is abrupt and clearly defined. Furthermore, it is clear from 22:3, in which it is said, "And there shall be no curse any more," that it cannot be speaking of Millennial times. For from the Old Testament and from Rev. 20:7-9, it is clear that prior to the end of the Thousand Years the earth had not yet been entirely and forever delivered from the curse. Nay, moreover, the whole description of the Lamb's wife, the Holy City, is that of a quite different world from the Millennial earth of which the Old Testament prophecies speak. One notable feature in the new earth is that "the sea is no more." This is not figurative language. Its meaning is obvious. There is henceforth no more *sea*,—not as some explain it, as referring only to the Mediterranean Sea. It declares that the oceans and seas are gone from the new earth. We are not concerned to explain the change, nor to speculate on its consequences, but to note this characteristic of the new creation. The nations mentioned in verses 24, 26, and 22:2 are the same as the "men" of 21:3. They are the nations of men in the Post-Millennial earth.

In verses 1-8, the prophet John gives a very brief, general, and *non-symbolic* description of the Ages to come; and then, in verse 9, returns, and in the remaining verses to 22:5 gives a much more detailed description of the same, in language that is highly symbolic, in the main. For this more complete and detailed description, he is granted a special vision of the city, by his being "carried away in the Spirit" to an exceedingly high mountain, from which he could obtain a better view of it.

Without doubt, the New Jerusalem, "the Holy City," is the most difficult subject in the whole book to understand and interpret. The various terms, "the Holy City," "New Jerusalem," "The Bride," "the Wife of the Lamb," and "the Tabernacle of God," are all equivalent and synonymous terms. If this be clearly seen, the interpretation will be greatly simplified. The subject is so great and marvellous, that all of these terms are needed to set forth the various aspects of the redeemed, and their relationship to God, to Christ, to one another, to the New Earth, and to the race of men then dwelling on the earth.

In Chapters 17 and 18 we had a description of the Unholy city, Babylon the Great, the Anti-Bride—the Harlot, "The Synagogue of Satan," "the habitation of demons, and the hold of every unclean spirit." There also was given the account of her humiliation and destruction. In the present chapter is given the description of "the Holy City," the "habitation of God," the Wife of the Lamb, and the picture of her exaltation and glory. If this contrast be well apprehended, still more will have been gained toward a correct interpretation of this difficult chapter.

It is not *heaven* that is here being described, as is so generally supposed. It is the *Church of Christ*. Not the Church as we know it now, in its present state of imperfection, when the tares and other weeds are found standing together with the wheat. Nor, again, is it the *wheat* from which the tares and weeds have been separated. For in the wheat there are two different elements which, in like manner, need to be separated from each other. The straw and chaff,

which had been at one time inseparably connected with the good grain, must be broken up and winnowed out. In the straw and chaff we have a type of the *flesh*, the *old life*. The wheat belongs to the *new* life. It is, in reality, a new life—a new plant, which has been formed in the old. “That which is flesh is flesh.” The works of the flesh have never been wanting in the life of the most godly wheat plant, except in the one perfect example of Him who came to be, in Himself, the beginning of a New Creation. The straw and chaff represent all in a Christian that belongs to the old nature, the old creation. All this is to be separated from the wheat. Nothing but the pure grain will be gathered into the Celestial Garner.

The same truth is presented in the Sacred Word under other figures. We have already seen it in our study of Chapter 12, under the symbol of the birth of the Man-Child. The Woman was the wheat in the field, before the threshing and winnowing. The catching up of the Man-Child was the bringing of the pure grain into the garner of heaven. In the present chapter, it is the same pure and winnowed wheat that meets us, under another name, and in a different form. Here it is called a *city*—New Jerusalem. And, as if to justify the use of all these different symbols, it adds another—the *Bride*. There is a great difference between a city and a bride,—as great, in truth, as that between *wheat*, *Man-Child*, and *Church*.

In this chapter, the picture before us is that of a *city*. Its aspect as Bride, or Sanctuary, is less prominent than the view we have of it as the City, or Commonwealth of God. “A city is the emblem of associ-

ated and ordered life" (Newton). If we gather all the scattered light of Scripture and focus it upon the subject of this vision of the "Tabernacle of God," "the Holy City," we shall find in it another illustration of how the Scriptures are their own best interpreter.

Our Lord said, "I will build my Church" (Matt. 16:18). "Ye are God's building," said Paul. "Know ye not that ye are a temple (Greek, *Sanctuary*) of God?" (I Cor. 3:9, 16). "For we are a temple of the living God, even as God said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people" (II Cor. 6:16). Of this building, "Christ Jesus Himself is the Chief Corner Stone" (Eph. 2:20). "Christ, the Son of the living God," is the Rock, on which He has said He will build His Church (Is. 28:16, I Pet. 2:5). That there was also in Matt. 16:18 a secondary reference to Peter, we need not fear to admit, because of the wrong use to which the Romanists have put the passage. For although Christ is the Chief Corner Stone, the apostles and prophets are built *as a foundation* upon it (Eph. 2:20). So also verse 14 of this chapter teaches: "and the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

As the apostles and prophets represent foundation stones in this heavenly building, or city, so others of God's people are represented as being built into different parts of the same glorious building, or collection of buildings, which would thus take on more the appearance of a *city*. How beautifully is all this set

forth in Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the Chief Corner Stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (2:19-22; compare also Eph. 4:11-16).

Individual believers are spoken of as "living stones" (I Pet. 2:5). Some will fill a more honored and conspicuous place than others in the completed structure. "He that overcometh I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God" (3:12, I Cor. 3:10-13). "A pillar in the Sanctuary" is more prominent and beautiful than many another stone. Some of the Lord's people are gems of rarest beauty—Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Polycarp, Athanasius, Augustine, Chrysostom, Huss, Luther, would represent stones of exceeding purity. So also among the gems of purest luster might be mentioned such as Hannah, Mary, Monica, and Madam Guyon. The Builder and Maker of this Celestial city has millions of living stones of priceless value with which to adorn the walls of this holy city, which is "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband," before it descends "from God out of heaven, having the glory of God."

Notwithstanding the fact that it is "living stones" that are built into this city—nay, rather let us say, notwithstanding the unpromising nature of the *mate-*



*rial* with which God begins, when He takes us in hand—it is said of the city, “And the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass.” Gold is the symbol of the *divine nature*. All who are built into this city are thus seen in their relation to God as sons, and “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). The crystalline purity of the gold is an indication, or pledge, of the absolute perfection to which His saving and sanctifying work will have been carried.

No marvel then, that the glory of this city is “the glory of God” (ver. 10). It should not be forgotten that the glory and beauty of each separate stone or gem is the glory of *Christ*. Christ has been formed in each one of them (Gal. 4:19), and all their luster and preciousness are due to this fact. He is “the author and the perfecter of their faith” (Heb. 12:2). He is “The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” of this “tabernacle of God.” He is the foundation, and He is also “the Top Stone,” which in God’s own time shall be brought forth and set in its place “with shoutings, Grace, Grace, unto it” (Zech. 4:7). At that time when the Wife of the Lamb is at last adorned and made ready for her husband, then, as at no previous time, it may be said of her, “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied” (Is. 53:11).

It seems almost like desecration to attempt to picture in words what words are not capable of describing. Words are of human coinage, to represent things within the range of man’s comprehension and experience. But here is something beyond the sphere of either. This is a subject into which man, in reality,

has never entered, and which, in his present state, he is unable to enter. All he can do is to stand on some high point, like John, and catch the Beatific Vision from a distance. It was "in the Spirit" that John was carried to the place from which he could see. And that is still the way by which we must get the vision, if we have it.

Let us not make too much of the measuring reed, for the purpose of learning the exact size of this city; nor let us, like some, try to estimate the distance above the earth's surface at which it comes to rest and remains. This is to miss the symbolism. The measurements are possibly intended to denote, in a symbolic way, the perfection of proportion in this city—this great commonwealth of the redeemed, and the absence therefrom of all inequalities and imperfections which mar the best of human achievements. It may be that they are to represent, in a different way, and under another figure, *the supreme excellence and perfection of the company of the redeemed*, the place which God has chosen, and which He is now adorning to be His own peculiar and eternal habitation. God's delight is to dwell in the midst of His people. It is so IN THE PRESENT AGE: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Is. 57:15). He will also dwell with them, but more manifestly and with greater glory, IN THE MILLENNIUM: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah" (Zech. 2:10). But the most perfect and abiding fel-

lowship and intimacy will be "IN THE AGES TO COME," when those "of a contrite and humble spirit" will have been exalted to the "high and holy place," and when they too shall "inhabit eternity." It is for this He has chosen us,—to be "a habitation of God,"—His favorite and eternal dwelling place.

All this is clearly revealed in this vision of the city of God. The whole passage shows it, but more particularly in certain places, as in 22:3, 4: "And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein \* \* \* \* and they shall see His face." This is not one of *many* royal residences of our King. It is the *only* Capital city. There is no other place where "*the throne of God and of the Lamb*" will be found. There is no other place where He will have another palace, after the manner of earthly kings, to which He may withdraw at times, so that His servants cannot "see His face" as they serve. The same wonderful truth is also brought out in verse 22, which, in addition, sets forth the *perfect communion of the saints with God*: "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof." In the Old Jerusalem, the temple was, by far, the most conspicuous and the most wonderful object. It was the glory of the city, the supreme pride and joy of every Israelite. So in the New Jerusalem, "the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb" will more than take the place of pre-eminence which belonged to the temples of Solomon and Herod in the ancient days.

The perfect fulness of satisfaction which God gives

to His people is further shown in three other prominent features of the heavenly commonwealth:

1. He is their Light. "And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (ver. 23). It is otherwise now. The nations are unwilling to "walk in the light of God." They have made for themselves other lights, which only serve to distort everything on which they fall, and to make the surrounding darkness more intense than before.

2. The "River of the Water of Life" has its source under "the throne of God and of the Lamb." All life proceeds from God, and is maintained only by His grace. For another beautiful description of the same river, see Ezek. 47:1-9.

3. The same truth is taught in the Tree of Life. Standing on each side of the river, with its roots reaching out to the crystal clear stream, its leaf never withers, and its fruit fails not to mature every month (Ezek. 47:12). After the fall of man, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree (ξύλον, LXX.) of life and live forever" (Gen. 3:22). But in the New Paradise there will be no such restraint. All who "enter in by the gates into the city" will "have the right to (Greek, *authority over*) the Tree of Life." "To him that overcometh," runs the promise, "to him will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God" (2:7). Even "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." This does not mean that the nations will be subject to sickness

in the days of which this speaks; for "there shall be no curse any more" in those days. Have we not in this "Tree of Life" another reference to the atoning work of Christ? That it has some mysterious and blessed connection with the Cross, we cannot doubt. The word here used for tree, in the Greek, is not δένδρον, the ordinary word for tree, but ξύλον, the word, rather, for *timber*, or *beam*. It is this word, *xylon*, that is always used of the Cross, when that is spoken of as a *tree*, as in Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29, Gal. 3:13 and I Pet. 2:24. It is also the word used in Rev. 2:7. Who then can doubt that its use here, instead of *dendron*, is for the purpose of connecting it with the Cross on which "the Prince of Life" died, which has yielded the fruit of eternal life to all the redeemed, and is the source and supply of life to all the nations living on the new earth.

And what are all the glories and privileges of this city to the *nations on the earth*? Much every way. Their relation to it is close and vital. Let us ever bear in mind that the word and description of the city are highly symbolical,—that *the City represents God and the Redeemed in loving and perfect intimacy and eternal union*.

The relationship of the nations to this holy Commonwealth, will be intimate, but not so close and continuous. It may be illustrated by a reference to the old Jerusalem and the land of Promise. The temple was in Jerusalem. The throne of the house of David was there. The tribes went up to it from all parts of the land for worship, for instruction, for social intercourse, and for festivities. After the feast, or visit,

whatever its occasion may have been, the visitors would return to their own homes. So in the *New Jerusalem*, the dwellers on the earth will ever find a most hospitable and joyous welcome. Its gates will be open to them day and night; and freest access will be granted to all. And as in the olden days, the desirable things of Israel were brought into the holy city, so in the ages to come "they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into" this other Holy City—the New Jerusalem. Entrance *into* the city is here affirmed, not *approach* "unto it," as some would understand. For the open gates are mentioned in a way to imply *entrance*.

While in the city, they would doubtless have "the freedom of the city," access to all its privileges, enjoyment of its blessed communion, its supernal light and joy, its soul-refreshing fruits and waters.

It is not for us to speculate in regard to a hundred other questions that might arise concerning "the nations" of the Post-Millennial earth. Where Scripture is silent it is not well to be inquisitive. "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).



## CHAPTER XXII.

THE first five verses of this chapter have been considered in connection with Chapter 21, because they form an inseparable part of the vision of the New Jerusalem.

The remaining verses (6-21) speak altogether of a different subject. They are the concluding words of the book, and may be regarded as the Epilogue, in which is found a most solemn reiteration of what was declared in the Prologue (1: 1-7), as to the authority, importance, and demands of the entire book.

In these closing verses are contained:

1. The three fold *imprimatur*, or divine signature.
2. The thrice repeated solemn declaration, "Behold I come quickly."

3. The triple response from earth, "Come."

The *imprimatur* is very remarkable, in itself. In Chapter 1: 1-3, there was also made a very solemn attestation as to the divine origin and authority of the book. But here we have the signature, or *imprimatur*, of God, three times affixed, as if to emphasize, by so much more, the importance of this book to the life and thought of men. It is as though the three Persons of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, had placed, each one, His own seal of authorship and approval upon it.

In each case, however, the speaker is the Lord Jesus.

In the first (verse 6), He speaks for the Father; in the third for the Spirit (verses 18, 19).

1. "And He said unto me, These words are faithful and true, and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book" (verses 6, 7). Here is the Mount Gerizim of the Gospel—the Mount of Blessing, which shows the blessedness of those who keep this law (Deut. 11:29, 27:12).

2. The second (ver. 16) is the signature of the Son: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the Churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star."

3. In verses 18, 19, we have as weighty and solemn an utterance as can be found in the entire Scriptures. It is the *imprimatur* of the Spirit: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." This is the Mount Ebal of the New Testament, the Mount of the Curse (Deut. 11:29). Here are given in words of solemn admonition the Lord's testimony as to the authority of the Holy Spirit, and the exceeding importance of this portion of the inspired Word. It brings to the mind another time when Christ gave warning to men, not to treat with indifference or con-

tempt the testimony of the Holy Spirit: "Therefore I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in that which is to come" (Matt. 12: 31, 32). Alford well remarks on this passage that "the adding and taking away are in the application and reception in the heart. All must be received and realized. This is at least an awful warning both to those who despise and neglect this book, and to those who add to it by irrelevant and trifling interpretations."

The divinely transcendent nature of the revelation contained in this book is most strikingly shown by the peculiar exhibition of human weakness recorded in verses 8, 9. John, the mighty seer, the inspired prophet, whose spiritual vision was like the eye of an eagle, assayed to worship the angel that had showed him these things. We can easily see how one who had been shown the glories of the Holy City would be so moved by a transport of ecstasy as to feel the strong desire and impulse to worship. But instead of offering his worship to God, to whom all the honor and the glory belonged, he fell at the feet of his heavenly attendant. This was very natural, to be sure, but it was none the less unworthy and sinful in John to offer worship to any other than God. The incident illustrates how immeasurably above the highest flights of John's thought, or imagination, lay the sphere of the revelation through which the Lord had been conducting

him. The passage contains a fitting rebuke (none the less keen because implied) to all who would see in this book anything less than a revelation by God of things altogether beyond the range of human knowledge or fancy.

And as these closing verses are a powerful witness to the divine and surpassingly exalted character of this book, so also the book, as a whole, bears a peculiar testimony to the unity and inspiration of the whole Bible. The last four Chapters, in particular, attest the historical trustworthiness of the first four Chapters of Genesis in a most extraordinary way. It is by no mere coincidence that these two passages are so strikingly correlated, that each may be said to be the counterpart of the other. Verily, "this was from the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes." Let the reader note the remarkable contrasts in these two passages, and ponder well their significance.

Genesis I-IV speaks of:

1. The First Creation.
2. The First Sabbath.
3. The First Adam,—the Head of the Old Humanity.
4. Eve—the wife of the First Adam, sinning, condemned, sorrowing.

Revelation XIX-XXII speaks of:

1. The New Creation.
2. The holy Rest in the New Creation.
3. The Second Adam—the Head of the New Humanity.
4. The Second Eve,—the Bride of Christ, holy, exalted, glorious, "in exceeding joy."

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|---|--|
| 5. The Garden of Eden.  | 5. The Paradise of God.  |
| 6. The Fall of Man.   | 6. Man's full Redemption and Restoration.  |
| 7. Sin.   | 7. Perfect Holiness.   |
| 8. Communion broken.  | 8. Communion restored, perfect, eternal.   |
| 9. Death.   | 9. Eternal Life.   |
| 10. The Promise.  | 10. Its complete fulfillment.  |
| 11. Loss of Eden.   | 11. Restoration to the greater bliss of Paradise.  |
| 12. Exclusion from the Tree of Life.  | 12. Access to and "authority over the Tree of Life."   |
| 13. Earth Cursed.   | 13. Earth's full deliverance from the Curse.   |
| 14. Satan in the Garden, tempting and bruising.   | 14. Satan bruised, and in the Lake of Fire.  |
| 15. The Seed of the Serpent (Cain and his line), dominant, persecuting, building cities, gaining the world. | 15. The Serpent's Seed,—The Antichrist, the False Prophet and the False Bride, overcome, dispossessed of the Kingdom and cast into the Lake of Fire. |

16. The Seed of the Woman (Abel and Seth), persecuted, killed, and of no reputation.

16. The Seed of the Woman,—Christ and His Bride, risen, victorious, triumphant, in the City of God, possessing “the Kingdom and the power and the glory,” “unto the ages of the ages.”

If the first four Chapters of Genesis are myths and legends, as so many are claiming, the same will need to be affirmed of Rev. XIX-XXII. The two passages stand or fall together, and so with them also, all that lies between. The opening Chapters of Genesis have well been called “the seed-plot of the whole Bible.” All that follows the third Chapter to the end of the Sacred Canon is the inspired history of the tremendous conflict between “the seed of the serpent” and “the seed of the Woman,” of which Genesis 3:15 is such a clear and definite prophecy. The alignment of the two forces for the deadly struggle is already seen in Chapter IV. On one side is Cain, the first-born son of Adam, while his brother Abel is on the other. From that point on, what could better describe the Scriptures than to say that they are the history of the great war between Satan and his seed, and Christ and all that are His? Or what more fitting conclusion could there be to this Word of inspiration, than that which the Holy Spirit has given in the final Chapters of this book, in which He shows that the great promise in Gen. 3:15 will be fulfilled in a manner alto-



gether worthy of Him "who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"?

And as the victory and triumph will be worthy of the occasion and of the Giver, so also the unbroken peace and perfect blessedness of the ages, which then begin, will be such as only the Great King, Our Father, could give to His rejoicing and glorified children. Although the years seem long to us, as we are wont to measure the flight of time, this period of conflict and testing through which we are now passing, is brief indeed, and, in comparison with the ages of the ages, will prove, as it were, but the tick of a second-hand on the great dial of eternity.

The seer was bidden to leave unsealed "the words of the prophecy of this book." They are therefore meant to remain open and available to every one that "hath an ear" to "hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches." The power of these words mightily to affect the life of those who read and keep them, is not only affirmed in the book itself, but may also be seen in those who observe them.

Verse 11 does not refer, as commonly supposed, to a perpetuation in the next world of the condition of those departing this life. The meaning seems rather to be this: "the time is at hand,"—so near, in fact, that during the remainder of it, the greatest freedom will be allowed by God to all to work out that which is pleasing to themselves. He will not interfere, but will keep silence. "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be

made holy still." How closely this corresponds to what was written in Daniel concerning a similar period of the non-interference and silence of God which preceded the First Coming of the Lord: "Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand: but they that are wise shall understand" (Dan. 12:10).

But though the time may seem long to unbelief, it is not so to the eye of faith. For thus "saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness," "Behold I come quickly." There is also a significance in the three-fold repetition of this promise in verses 7, 12 and 20. For this promise cannot be held too tenaciously, nor can it recur to the mind too frequently. This triple reiteration is the best warrant for "those who love His appearing" *to continue to rejoice in the anticipation*. To such an earnest, longing expectation, the attentive reading and hearing of the words of the prophecy of this book are specially designed and fitted to lead. To this thrice repeated promise there goes up from earth the three-fold supplication, "Come!" The Spirit says, "Come!" The Bride says, "Come!" and John, as the first of all "that heareth," and as their representative, says, "AMEN, COME! LORD JESUS." Oh, that the people of God, without exception, would, each day, offer this prayer with the same fervor of heart and impatience of desire!

"Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a gazelle or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices" (Song of Songs, 8:14).

THE END.

## APPENDIX A.

THE LORD'S DAY FORESHADOWED IN THE OLD  
TESTAMENT.

## PAGE 12.

IN the Levitical law, the *eighth* day (and also the *first* day of the week) are often used as a type or symbol of *the new creation—the new life in God—the resurrection life in Christ—the Lord's Day*. It was on the eighth day after the birth of a male child that the rite of circumcision was administered. So also the cleansing ceremonies in cases of issue were, in all cases, to be performed on the eighth day.

To the average reader, the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus is but a tedious enumeration of ceremonies to be gone through in cases of leprosy. Studied in the light of its typical significance, however, it is found to be one of the richest and sweetest chapters in the Bible. Here the significance of the eighth day and its contrast with the seventh are strikingly and beautifully set forth.

In verse 9 we read, "And it shall be on the seventh day, that he (the leper who has been healed) shall shave all the hair off his head, and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water and he shall be clean." What a striking type of the *death* of the believer, is all this which is done on the *seventh*

day. It represents the full and complete putting off of all that pertains to the old nature. But on the *eighth* day, the great ceremony takes place which restores him to all the privileges of God's house, to his own home, and to fellowship with all whom he loved. Verses 10-20 beautifully symbolize his resurrection and his presentation to God, being "set before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

Notice also that it was just one week before this,—that is, on the *first* day, that the leper had come *into the camp*, after ceremonies had been performed which set forth, in type, the death of the believer to the old life in sin and his spiritual resurrection with Christ to walk in newness of life all the days of his pilgrimage, or camp-life, in this world. And although he has been "pronounced" clean (ver. 7) by the priest, he is still denied all the highest and holiest privileges and joys of the congregation. He must "dwell *outside* his tent seven days,"—type of the Christian's earthly life after he has been cleansed from his sin.

In both cases, the first and the eighth days are prophetic and typical of resurrection and the new life,—the *first* day being the type of his conversion and regeneration, and the *eighth* day, of the resurrection of his body, and of his revealing, or manifestation in glory with Christ (Col. 3:4). How exactly all this corresponds to our Lord's remaining in the grave throughout the seventh day, or Sabbath, and of His resurrection and ascension to heaven on the eighth day,—that is, the *first* day of the week.

Again, in the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34-36, 39), the first and eighth days of the feast were days

of holy convocation, when all servile work was strictly forbidden. On whatever day of the week the first and eighth days of the feast fell, it was called a "Sabbath," or "*Solemn rest*," as the Revised Version more appropriately renders it: "on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest" (verse 39). Both days were as sacredly kept as the Sabbath, or seventh day.

Again, in the consecration of Aaron, as recorded in Lev. 8 and 9, we find the first and eighth days were marked by special and typical ceremonies. Not to dwell on those of the first day, we find special interest in those of the eighth day, in which the consecrating sacrifice of Christ, our High Priest, is strikingly prefigured by the Atonement which Aaron made, first for himself, and then for the people, and which ended with his return from within the tabernacle to bless the people.

So Christ, on the eighth day, entered into the Great Holy of Holies with His own blood, to make atonement for Himself and for His people. We are now still waiting in the outer Court, in the attitude of prayer, and watching for Him to come forth from the place of intercession and spread His hands over us in blessing.

Again, the year of Jubilee was the Eighth Sabbatic year. Every seventh year was a year of *rest*, a Sabbath. After a week of these Sabbatic years, *i. e.*, after every forty-nine years, there was a greater Sabbatic year—an *eighth* which immediately followed the seventh. This eighth Sabbatic year was the Year of Jubilee. It was always ushered in toward the end of the great day

of Atonement, by a blast of trumpets and the proclamation of liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof (Lev. 25:10). To every Israelite in the land, this meant freedom,—release from every debt, a new life, so to speak, and freedom from every past indebtedness. The point specially to be noticed here is that the Year of Jubilee was always the *Sunday* among Sabbatic years.

And, as if God would again reiterate, and emphasize in a new way, the significance of the Lord's Day, He gives still another special command concerning *the day after the Sabbath* following the Passover each year, when the sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest was to be waved before Jehovah (Lev. 23:9-11).

In this ceremony we see Christ set forth, in type, in His resurrection and presentation to God, as the first-fruits from the dead, on the eighth day,—that is, the *first* day of the week, the day on which the wave-sheaf was *always* offered.

The Feast of Pentecost always fell just seven weeks after the day on which the wave-sheaf was offered; or, in the words of Lev. 23:15, 16, "Ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven Sabbaths shall there be complete; even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah."

Nothing could be more explicit than these words. The first day counted would be "the morrow after the Sabbath" following the Passover. And therefore "the morrow after the *seventh* Sabbath," the fiftieth day,—



*the day of Pentecost,—would always fall on the first day of the week.* The verses just quoted make it certain that it was on Sunday—the Lord's Day—when the outpouring of the Spirit occurred on the day of Pentecost, of which Acts 2 gives an account. Concerning this day of Pentecost, the Mosaic law prescribed that it should be *a holy day of rest*: “And ye shall make proclamation on the self-same day; *there shall be a holy convocation unto you; ye shall do no servile work.* It is a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations” (Lev. 23:21).

Now when we consider the cumulative force of all these instances in which the eighth day stands out so prominently above any other, as a day of greater privilege and of special grace, it seems difficult or impossible to over-estimate its significance. The types of the Old Testament are as truly “inspired of God” as other prophetic teachings. But much more than is the case with some prophecies, they require the spiritual eye and an understanding illumined by the Holy Spirit. And so, after our Lord's resurrection, and after He had breathed on the disciples and imparted to them the gift of the Holy Spirit, they must have seen new meaning in these prophetic passages. These must have been among the Scriptures which He then opened their minds that they might understand (Luke 24:44, 45).

## APPENDIX B.

## THE BAPTISM IN FIRE.

## PAGE 91.

THE Tribulation period,—“the Day of vengeance of our God” (Is. 61:2), we believe, is the time of the *fire baptism* mentioned in Matt. 3:11 and Luke 3:16.

The common interpretation of the words “in fire,” in these two passages, we believe, should be reconsidered.

The well-nigh universal view is that the baptism “in fire” is the baptism in the Holy Ghost,—that the two expressions are synonymous.

This we believe to be a serious error. One has but to run his eye over the passages under “Fire” in the Concordance to see that it is a term denoting *judgment*,—not sanctification, nor enduement with power.

A brief examination of the two passages in Matthew and Luke,—the only places where the baptism in fire is spoken of,—will make it clear that the two terms, “in the Holy Ghost,” and, “in fire,” cannot be synonymous.

In the great concourse of people to which John the Baptist is speaking, there are two wholly distinct classes. There are, in the first place, many of his own disciples who had been “baptized of him in the river Jordan confessing their sins.” Then there are

also a large number of Pharisees, Sadducees, and others who had “rejected for themselves the counsel of God, not having been baptized of him” (Luke 7:30), whom the great preacher addresses by the words “ye offspring of vipers.” In his discourse these two classes are described and contrasted with awful distinctness. He tells them that the Messiah, who is already standing in the midst of them, will bring grace and salvation to one, but judgment *by fire* to the other. In the first picture which he draws, there are before him two kinds of trees; every good tree would be spared, but “every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and *cast into the fire*.” In the second picture, there is before him a threshing floor, in the center of which is a great pile of two wholly different materials,—the wheat and the chaff. He tells them that the Christ will separate the one from the other, dealing with the one *in grace*, and with the other *in judgment*,—gathering the wheat into His garner, but burning up the chaff “with unquenchable fire.” In both passages the meaning of “fire” is unmistakable. Can it, then, be possible that the same word when used between them,—in the solemn declaration “He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire,”—should have a wholly different meaning? It is impossible that John should have declared to the unrepentant and unregenerate “offspring of vipers” that Messiah would baptize *them* with the Holy Ghost, as he must have declared, if the two terms are synonymous.

The divine agent in the separation of which John speaks is the πνεῦμα (*pneuma*, *spirit*, *wind*. See Jno. 3:8, where it has both these meanings). On the

threshing-floor, it is the *wind* that separates the wheat from the chaff. Among *men*, it is the *Spirit* that separates the children of Abraham from the "offspring of vipers,"—the seed of the Serpent (Gen. 3:15), "the sons of the Evil one" (Matt. 13:38). And as the subsequent treatment of the chaff by fire was wholly different from the operation of the wind which separated it from the wheat, so the baptism in fire must be altogether different from the baptism in the Holy Ghost, by whose agency "the sons of the kingdom" are separated from the "sons of the Evil one."

This interpretation of the words "in fire" is further borne out by their significant omission in Acts 1:5, where the Lord is addressing His *disciples only*: "For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." In no place, except where those addressed are expressly described as consisting, in part, of wicked men, are the words to be found, "He shall baptize you \* \* \* \* \* *in fire*."

Moreover, all this is in perfect accord with the picture drawn in Malachi (Chapters 3 and 4), of the work which Christ, "the Messenger of the Covenant", will do by means of fire in "the day of His coming." Mal. 4:1-3 does not speak of Pentecost, but of the great Tribulation: "For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Jehovah of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (ver. 1).

The close joining of the two phrases, "in the Holy Spirit," and, "in fire," is no proof that a wide interval of time does not separate the two events. In Isaiah 61:2, we have a similar instance, where the word "and" connects two clauses that speak of events separated from each other, already by nearly nineteen hundred years: "to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, AND the day of vengeance of our God." And as Jesus, in reading this passage in the Synagogue at Nazareth, paused and closed the book without reading the second clause,—“and the day of vengeance of our God” (Luke 4: 19-21)—so in His charge to His disciples, in Acts 1:4, 5, He made a similar omission, saying nothing about their being baptized *with fire* “not many days hence.” The baptism in the Holy Ghost belongs to “the year of Jehovah's favor,” but the baptism in fire is “the day of vengeance of our God.”

Examine also, in this connection, Matt. 13:40-42, 49, 50; II Thes. 1:7, 8; II Pet. 3:7; Rev. 8:7, 9:17, 18, 16:8, 9, 17:16, 18:8.

It is declared by many that, in the Scripture, fire is often used as a type of the Holy Spirit. But if, before accepting this view, the reader, with the aid of his Concordance, will make a careful study of every passage in the Bible where the word “fire” occurs, we are confident that he will not find a single passage where such a claim receives support.

The phenomenon observed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3) was not “tongues of fire,” as so many say, but “cloven tongues, *like as of fire.*” There rested on

the Spirit-filled disciples a luminous *appearance*, which *resembled* tongues of fire, in their lambent motions.

Sometimes in a brilliant auroral display, similar forked tongues, or lambent flames, are seen playing in the northern sky and mounting up to the very zenith. These are not tongues of fire, but forked tongues, *like as of fire*.



## APPENDIX C.

## THE YEAR DAY THEORY.

## PAGE 162.

IN order to apply the "year-day" theory in the exposition of the Apocalypse, Historical interpreters are under the necessity of contenting themselves with merely *approximate* dates. There is in it none of that exactness and fine precision which characterize all of God's works.

The 1260 years which, they claim (Rev. 13:5), is the period of the Beast, or the Antichrist, dates from A. D. 533, and also from A. D. 606-7. They regard the Beast as synonymous with the Papacy, or Papal Rome.

"The commencement of the twelve hundred and sixty years," says Cunninghame, "is to be marked by the giving of the saints, and times and laws, into the hands of the little horn.

"That the little horn is the papacy has been established with such force of evidence by Mede, Bishop Newton, Mr. Faber, and other writers on prophecy, that I do not consider it at all necessary to enter upon the proof of it.\* \* \* \* \*

"We are informed by the unerring testimony of history, that an act of the secular government of the Empire was issued in the reign of Justinian, whereby

the Roman Pontiff was solemnly acknowledged to be the head of the Church. \* \* \* \* \* And on this occasion he formally wrote to the Pope, as the acknowledged head of all the Churches, and all the holy priests of God, for his approbation of what he had done. \* \* \* \* \* From the date of the imperial epistle of Justinian to Pope John, in March 533, the saints, and times, and laws of the Church, may therefore be considered to have been formally delivered into the hands of the papacy, and this is consequently the true era of the twelve hundred and sixty years." Guinness, *History Unveiling Prophecy*, pp. 340-342.

This is very definite as a starting point. But, strange to say, this Beast has more than one birthday. A. D. 606 or 607 is another date which these same interpreters fix upon as the starting point of the 1260 years. This was the year when Emperor Phocas, by an imperial decree, acknowledged the headship of the Bishop of Rome over all the Churches of Christendom, as Justinian had done seventy-three or seventy-four years before. But more strange still is the fact that a plurality of dates is given when the period of the 1260 years *came to an end*, according as the reckoning from both dates be made in *solar* or in *prophetic* years. Thus we find that "from the decree of Justinian, in A. D. 533, the 1260 years period reached its termination in A. D. 1793, the central year of the French Revolution." Also that "from the decree of Phocas, in A. D. 606-7, the 1260 years, reckoned as calendar, or prophetic years of 360 days each, ended in 1848-9, the year of the great European Revolution, which witnessed the formal deposition of the Pope

from his temporal authority. \* \* \* \* \* Reckoned in full solar years, 1260 years from the decree of Phocas terminated in 1866-70. The years 1866-1870 witnessed the overthrow of Papal Austria by Protestant Prussia; the Spanish Insurrection, and deposition of the Queen; the Œcumenial council at Rome, and declaration of papal infallibility; the overthrow of the Imperial power of Papal France in its conflict with Prussia; and the rise of the Kingdom of United Italy, and of the Protestant Empire of Germany." "As there is not the slightest probability that United Italy will consent to give up its dearly won position, and restore the secular dominion of the Popes, we are warranted in considering the year 1870 as that which witnessed the End of Papal Temporal Power." *History Unveiling Prophecy*, pp. 342-3.

Thus the Papacy, which, let us remember, the Historical interpreters identify with the Beast, or the Antichrist, was seventy-seven years in falling! This seems the more remarkable in view of the fact that the Historical School, with the same breadth of vision, also regards "*Babylon the Great*," of Rev. 17 and 18, as synonymous with Papal Rome! But the awful suddenness and completeness of the fall of Babylon the Great is thus foretold in 18:21: "And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all."

But who that squarely faces the facts can say that Papal Rome has fallen? Or who is able to affirm that her temporal power is at an end? It matters not that

the outward form of temporal dominion is gone, and that the Pope considers himself a prisoner in the Vatican. His temporal power, in very fact, is as great to-day as it was in 1860. Nay, the power of Rome, as a *political system*, is greater to-day than it was one hundred, or even fifty years ago. Not, indeed, in France and Italy, but throughout the world, *in general*, and especially true is it in the United States and Great Britain. In view of all these things, it would be well if the Historical School could perceive that facts are against them. We are far enough removed from the times of Justinian and Phocas to pass upon the predictions with which their reigns have been associated. A principle, or divine rule, was enunciated nearly thirty-five hundred years ago, which holds good to this time. "When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, IF THE THING FOLLOW NOT, nor come to pass, *that* is the thing which Jehovah hath NOT spoken" (Deut. 18:22).

In justice to the Historical interpreters, however, it should be said that there are many exceedingly interesting analogies and correspondencies to be seen in the historical events which they have studied so carefully. *But analogy and correspondence are not FULFILLMENT of prophecy.* Old Testament history abounds in these analogies and resemblances. All history, in fact, is full of them. The overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea was not the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15; neither was the destruction of Haman and his fellow conspirators. But so remarkable is their analogy, or resemblance to the great event when Satan's head will be bruised, and his hosts will be overwhelmed with

destruction, that they are regarded as *types*, or *fore-shadowings* of that event. So if we find in certain historic events of the Christian era, striking analogies and general resemblances to events foretold in the Revelation, let us not regard them as fulfillments of the Apocalyptic prophecies, but rather as *analogies*, or adumbrations, of the great events prophesied. They cannot be *fulfillments*, for the various dates set for their fulfillment have all passed, and all things continue as before. Papal Rome is still here, and fully as powerful as ever. The Antichrist is not yet cast into the lake of fire; and certain it is Satan has not yet been bound.

Adumbration differs from fulfillment, as the shadow of a thing differs from the thing itself.

## APPENDIX D.

## ADOPTION.

## PAGE 196.

THE commonly accepted definitions and explanations concerning Adoption differ very materially from what we believe to be the teaching of the New Testament on that subject.

Adoption is defined in the Standard Dictionary as "the act of divine grace by which believers in Christ are received into the family of God."

According to the Westminster Catechism, "Adoption is an act of God's free grace whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God." That is to say, believers in Christ are sons of God *by adoption*. This view is very common. But Christians are sons of God *by birth* (Jno. 3:5, 6, 8, Gal. 3:26, 27), for the new spirit which they have received through the Holy Ghost is from God, who is "the Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9). They are therefore sons of God because they are "born," or "begotten" of God (I Jno. 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4). The Greek verb γεννάω (*gennao*) has the two-fold meaning of *to beget*, and *to give birth*.

If then they are sons by birth, how is it necessary for them to be adopted? For adoption means the making one a son who is not already a son *by birth*.



The word in the Greek ( υιοθεσια ), which is translated "adoption," means just what the English word means,—*adoption*, not sonship.

According to others, "Adoption is the act of God by which one already a child by the new birth, is placed in the position of an *adult son*." The time of this event is said to be "in the moment of receiving Christ."

It will be seen that in all these definitions, adoption is understood to denote a change in the status of the believer that has already taken place. And it is right here that they are all shown to be unsatisfactory and wide of the mark. For adoption is a change which is wholly *future*, as is apparent from Paul's definition of it in Rom. 8:23, where he says, we are "waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,"—a definition that cannot be improved upon. *Adoption* he says, *is the redemption of our body*. It is an event that is *still future*, because we are *waiting* for it. And it will not take place until "the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).

In regard to the question of sonship, it is to be said that there are but two ways by which it is possible for one to become a son,—by being *born* a son, or, by being *adopted* as a son.

Since then it is clear from God's Word that Christians are already sons *by birth*, why must we "wait for our adoption," and why the need of adoption?

It must not be forgotten that a regenerated man has a two-fold nature. He has a *human nature* into which a *new spiritual nature* has come from God. In the new birth the believer is "born of the Spirit," or "begotten of God." But this new relation of sonship

is affirmed with regard to his new spiritual nature only. It is never predicated of his humanity. As to his human nature, it continues to be, as before, a *human* nature,—nothing else. With respect to that, he is never called a son of God, but remains, to the end of his life, a son of man.

But *in the resurrection*, this *humanity*, or human nature, of a child of God *is adopted*. It is not only made immortal and incorruptible, but is also glorified and exalted to the position of *sonship*, so that he now becomes a son of God *in respect to his whole being*,—his two-fold nature. Adoption is a change which affects the status of our *human nature*, in particular. It is an act of God's grace whereby our humanity, that is, our redeemed human nature (both physical and psychic), is placed in the position of a son of God. When our salvation is complete we shall be sons of God in the fullest sense,—not half-sons, but sons in our entire being.

All this becomes more clear and certain to us by a study of the Person of Christ. For we have been "foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him" (I Jno. 3:2); also that "every one when he is perfected shall be as his Master" (Luke 6:40); and that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:21).

Now our blessed Lord possessed a two-fold nature. He is called, and He calls Himself, "the Son of God." But He also spoke of Himself as "*the Son of Man.*"

The distinction between the two natures of Christ is more clearly seen in some passages than in others. Sometimes it is His *deity* that speaks, as when He says, "Before Abraham was, I am." Sometimes it is His *humanity* that gives utterance, as in the words, "I thirst" (Jno. 19:28), "Give me to drink" (Jno. 4:7).

When He was about to return to the Father He prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (Jno. 17:5). Here the pronoun "I" can mean only *the Eternal Son of God*. But can there be any doubt that the "me" which is to be glorified is the *God-man*? In other words, He asks that His *deity* may be reinvested with the glory of which He "emptied Himself when He became incarnate" (Phil. 2:6-8), and also that His humanity with which He, as the Son of God, returns to heaven, may be glorified with the same glory and invested with all the power and authority which belonged, from all eternity, to Him, as the Son of God. We know from many places in the Word (see in particular Rom. 1:3, 4, Phil. 2:6-9) that this prayer was granted, and that it was as the glorified God-man that He "sat down at the right hand of God."

To this event, the time of *His* adoption, must be referred Heb. 1:5; for the words "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" can have reference only to Jesus as the *Son of Man*,—not to Him as the Son of *God*; for had He not been the only begotten and well-beloved Son of God from eternity, before time began,—before it could be said "this day"?

Such also is the teaching of Acts 13:33: "God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that He raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." The meaning of the Apostle here is very plain, that this declaration was made on the day of Christ's resurrection, which day, we have already seen, was the great day of His ascension to the Father.\*

This decree of which we are speaking, and also the other declaration of Heb. 1:5, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a son," are words full of precious significance to every child of God. For so shall it be said of us in the day of our adoption,—at "the revealing of the sons of God." The wonderful meaning of our own adoption is to be learned from the adoption of Him who is, or is to be, "the First-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

And, by the way, this word "*firstborn*" which has been so "hard to be understood," and which, particularly in Col. 1:15, has been used by Arians and Socinians, with so much embarrassment to their opponents, to disprove the deity of Our Lord, becomes clear and simple enough, when we consider that it is spoken of the *humanity* of Christ, and not of His eternal godhead. Instead, therefore, of its being a term to embarrass the Christian warrior, it is rather a mighty *slogan*, and all the more a word of blessed comfort and promise to all His people.

How then are we to explain Rom. 8:15, which says we have "received the Spirit of adoption"?

The explanation has already been given in verse 11:

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\* Page 10.

"But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The Apostle is not here (ver. 11) speaking of the resurrection at all, as is generally supposed. Nothing is said of a *physical quickening* of our *dead* bodies. Paul is here speaking of a *spiritual quickening* of our *mortal* (i. e., *yet living*) bodies. The word "*mortal*" ( θνητά ) means *subject to death,—destined to die*. That is to say, *mortal* bodies are not *dead* ( νεκρά ), but *living* bodies.

It is this spiritual quickening of our physical nature, rather than our own *will-power* and our own laborious efforts, that gives us victory over the rebellion and mutiny of the flesh, about which Chapter 7 has been speaking.

This quickening is effected by the power of the Holy Spirit, whom God sends to dwell in us. This Spirit is variously called in this chapter "the Spirit of life" (ver. 2), "the Spirit of God" (vers. 9, 14), "the Spirit of Christ" (ver. 9), and "the Spirit of Adoption" (ver. 15).

We are given to understand in this chapter that God sent this Spirit of adoption into our hearts for the purpose of bringing these reluctant and rebellious bodies (and *minds*) of ours up out of the condition in which we find them in Rom. 7. The picture in Rom. 7 represents one part of our two-fold nature as perfectly submissive to the will of God. The trouble is with the other part, which is rebellious and will not submit. Why the difference?

The first is the new spiritual nature,—the “new heart,” “the new man,” which is already a son by the new birth. The other part is the human nature, the physical man (including the *mind*). These two are unequally yoked, and are mutually antagonistic. Indeed, the difference is so great that Paul compares them to a living man chained to a dead body (Rom. 7:24).

But here is where the marvellous power and goodness of our God shines forth. In these distressing circumstances, He sends to our relief the Spirit of adoption, who comes into us and quickens our mortal bodies. This almighty “Spirit of life in Christ” works in us, that is, in this disobedient human nature of ours, “both to will and to work, for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), telling it of God’s gracious purpose to give it sonship in the resurrection. Instantly it catches God’s idea, swiftly obeys His voice and ceases its rebellion. And from now on, it, *i. e.*, this mortal body, behaves like a son, and joins with our spiritual nature in crying out “Abba, Father,” while as yet it has only the *promise* of sonship.

Hence the victory and peace of the man living in Rom. 8, in contrast with the terrific conflict and unsuccessful effort of the man in Rom. 7, who is trying to do it all himself.

This is the explanation of the remarkable thing that is witnessed so often in Rescue Missions, when men, on making a full surrender of themselves to God, lose, in an instant and forever, sinful appetites against which they had vainly been struggling, in desperation, so



many years. It is the Spirit of adoption at work within them, quickening their mortal bodies.

This is not *adoption*, but an *earnest* of it, just as the quickening of our mortal (θνητά) bodies mentioned in verse 11 is not the resurrection of our dead (νεκρά) bodies, but an earnest of it.

Gal. 4: 1-6 brings us to the same conclusion from a different direction. The argument of the Apostle is to show the difference between the Jewish and the Christian Dispensations, and the superiority of *grace* to the *law*. This he illustrates by reference to a well known Roman custom in regard to the bringing up of children. During the infancy and boyhood of the free-born Roman child, he was "kept in ward" under tutors and guardians, and was so restricted in his freedom that "he differed in no respect from a slave, though he were lord of all" (verses 1, 2). At the end of this period of non-age, he was formally invested with a visible token of manhood,—the *toga virilis*. He was not more a son or heir now, after this investiture, than he was before. He was a son and heir even then, during all this period of babyhood and immaturity. But now he realizes his sonship, as he could not then, and has a sensible proof of his relationship to his inheritance.

In a similar way, during the Mosaic dispensation, "before faith came," although the believing Jew was heir to, and lord of, all that belongs to the Christian, he was "kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (Gal. 3: 23). "But when the fulness of the time

came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman\* born under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The adoption here mentioned is not spoken of as an accomplished fact. The time of it is not stated in this passage. We learn when it will take place from Rom. 8: 19, 23. But pending the fulfillment of this promise, God sends the Spirit of adoption into our hearts to make us realize our sonship. Sending the Spirit of adoption into our hearts is not adoption. This sending of the Spirit of adoption is not prior to our becoming sons, but *subsequent to* and *in consequence of it*: "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (ver. 6).

The Roman boy of fourteen or fifteen did not receive the *toga virilis* in order that he might be a son, but *because he was a son*, now entering the period of adult manhood, and as a visible sign and proof that he was a son and an heir to his father's estate.

So now, in the Gospel Dispensation, when the Holy Spirit comes into the heart of a believer, He "beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8: 16). It is a sensible token, a tangible proof of our sonship, and that we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

But the coming of the Spirit into our hearts means far more to us than this. The "heart" is *the inner man*; and when the Spirit of adoption takes possession of the heart, the *entire being of man*,—body, soul and

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\* This is the only allusion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the New Testament, after Acts 1: 14.

spirit,—receives such a mighty awakening to newness of life, that the mortal body joins with the spirit of the man in its cry of recognition, “Abba, Father!” and henceforth yields a joyful obedience to God through the ever-quickenings power of the indwelling Spirit of His Son.

Those who affirm that the adoption of a child of God has already taken place, base their view upon this passage. They say that a distinction must be made between *child* and *son*,—between τέκνα Θεοῦ (*tekna Theou*), and υἱοὶ Θεοῦ (*hyioi Theou*), and that one who is a child (*teknon*) of God by birth, is, by an act of divine grace, which is called “adoption,” placed in the position of a son (*hyios*).

But no such distinction is possible: for

1. No one ever adopts his own child. One’s child by birth is already his son.

2. The word *teknon* (child), being derived from the verb *tikto* (τίκτω), *to beget, to give birth*, discredits altogether such a distinction.

3. In passages like Jno. 1:12 and I Jno. 3:2, the word *teknon* is used of a relationship every whit as perfect and exalted as *hyios* (son) can be. Indeed, in Rom. 8:14, 16, 17, 19 and 21, the two terms “children” (*tekna*) and “sons” (*hyioi*) are perfectly synonymous and interchangeable.

4. This fancied distinction seems to have sprung from the mistake of assuming that the word translated *child*, in Gal. 4:1, 3, is *teknon* in the Greek; whereas this word is not found in the whole passage. In both

these verses, the word for child is *nepios* (νήπιος, *babe, infant*), and can be used only of children in their infancy, while, on the other hand, *teknon* is used of offspring of any age.

It must be apparent to all how strong testimony is borne by this passage in support of the view discussed in Chapter 5, that believers in former dispensations are members of the same family of God as ourselves, and are heirs to all that belongs to the Christian.

## APPENDIX E.

## DEATH AND HADES.

## PAGE 276.

It is customary to speak of Hades (Heb., Sheol) as the place of departed and disembodied spirits. And such, unquestionably, it is. But these are not all it contains. From a study of the word "Sheol" in the Old Testament, it is apparent that it contains also the *bodies* of some. In Num, 16: 30, 33, we learn that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their households, "went down alive into Sheol." This can mean nothing else than that they went down into Sheol *with body and soul united*. But from this passage we are not to understand that Sheol, or Hades, was the appointed place for the bodies of *all* who died in the time before Christ. This seems to have been an exceptional case; for in verse 30 Moses speaks of their death as "a new thing," referring, we believe, not so much to the manner of their death,—their being engulfed by an earthquake,—as it does to their *going down alive into Sheol*. Ps. 55: 15 taken with its context seems to imply that "going down alive into Sheol" was a special way by which God sometimes dealt with uncommon offenders. The subject, however, is full

of mystery; but the words οἱ νεκροί, in Rev. 20:13, make one fact clear, viz., that there are some bodies in confinement in Hades; for it has been shown in Chapter 14 that the words "the dead," οἱ νεκροί, refer to the *corporeal part of man*, and are never used of the *souls* of the departed. There is no less difficulty in explaining what is meant by Death, when this word is used with the meaning it sometimes has; for example, where it is mentioned with Hades. Both words are personified in a number of places, as in Hos. 13:14, Rev. 6:8 and 20:13. But let it be noted that they are never synonymous. In Rev. 1:18 the expression "the keys of Death and Hades" amounts to a declaration that the two places are totally distinct from each other so as to require different keys. The distinction is also clear in Rev. 6:8: "And I saw and behold, a pale horse; and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth," Death claiming the bodies, and Hades the souls of the slain. The same distinction is also observed in Hos. 13:14. The first clause, "I will ransom them from the power of Sheol," is not restated in different words in the second clause: "I will redeem them from Death." The two clauses contain wholly different ideas,—one, of the ransom of the *soul*, and the other of the redemption of the *body*. That Death is the usual custodian of the bodies of the deceased, is further brought out in I Cor. 15:55: "O Death, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?"



It is very significant that Paul does not use the word "Hades" here; for he is speaking, throughout the chapter, of the resurrection of the body, and its victory over Death. Hades does not (usually) have the custody of the body. Its mention, therefore, would have introduced another subject into the discussion,—the subject of the *soul*, about which nothing had been said in the entire chapter.



## SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.

## THE NICOLAITANS—CHAP. II.

WE are more fully persuaded than before that the key to the meaning of the references to the Nicolaitans in the Epistles to Ephesus and Pergamum is to be found in the etymology of the word, which is derived from the Greek verb *Niko* (to conquer) and *laos* (people), from which we get our English word *laity*.

Nicolaitanism, we believe, consists in the denial of the priesthood of believers, thereby depriving them of the rights and privileges granted them in the gospel, by virtue of their being sons of God.

According to the Scriptural conception, a priest is one who has access to God for confession, for supplication, for intercession, for praise, for communion and in the use of His Word. This authority or privilege is granted to *all* believers by Christ, our Great High Priest, who has opened up for them "a new and living way" to God, for which access He has sanctified and perfected them forever (Heb. x:14, 19-22).

"Ye are a royal priesthood" spake the Holy Ghost in 1 Pet. ii:9, but the Nicolaitans would deprive the laity of this holy office and of all the precious privileges that belong to it, taking from them their freedom wherewith Christ has made them free, thrusting them back under the law and reducing them to the position of captives and slaves.

Very early in the history of the Christian Church, as has already been shown (pp. 25, 26), the innate tendency in fallen human nature began to manifest itself

once more in its desire to substitute the teachings of men for the Word of God. Nicolaitanism seizes upon this innate weakness in man as an occasion for subjugating (*Nico*) the people (*laoi*) of God and bringing them into bondage to another master. It seeks to throw a halo of divine authority around the opinions and utterances of *men*, or of some *school of doctrine*, or *ecclesiastical system*. As the authority of these schools and systems becomes more firmly established, the voice of God's Word grows fainter and fainter till its sound is hushed in the loud and discordant noises of earth. And not content with this, the Nicolaitans would arrogate to themselves authority to stand between God and the believer, requiring them to come to themselves, rather than to God, claiming to have the power of life and death,—of absolution, excommunication, anathema, and the *jus gladii*, or "right of the sword," which Christ reminds the Church in Pergamum belongs to Himself: "These things saith He that hath the sharp two-edged sword" (ii:12).

All this is outlined in the first definite mention of them we have in the history of the Christian Church, in what is said of Diotrephes in 3d John 9, 10: "But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth, and casteth them out of the Church."

Such conduct was in violation of both the letter and spirit of Christ's commands when speaking of those

who "love the chief seats in the synagogues and the salutations in the market-places and to be called of men Rabbi. But," said He, "be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your teacher and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth; for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters [or *leaders*], for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. xxiii:6-11). See also Luke xxii:25-27, Jno. xiii:12-16 and 1 Pet. v:3.

In Diotrefes and the other Nicolaitans of the first century we see but the springing blade, the tender growth of that most noxious plant. Had the Ephesian and Pergamenian Christians heeded the warning words of Christ the whole story of Church History would have been written very differently. They neglected, however, to do as bidden, and so this poisonous growth was left to develop in its own way and by the law governing the growth of all things: "First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark iv:28).

If, then, we would know what Nicolaitanism really is, we need to see it in its *fruit*, for "a tree is known by its fruit."

But may the Spirit of God turn the search-light of His truth into the heart of each one who reads these words. For it may be true that in every branch of Christendom "the mystery of [this particular] iniquity doth already work." Let us not, then, in pride and over-confidence congratulate ourselves, as we survey the development of Nicolaitanism in one of its matur-est and most perfect varieties. For as the fruit of

one tree may differ greatly in size, color, flavor and in the time of its maturing, from the fruit of another tree of the same kind, so it may be in our own case, and in condemning another we may be pronouncing judgment on ourselves. Nevertheless it is necessary to *know trees*, and the study of spiritual botany is an obligation that God has laid upon us all. But let us not forget that even in the churches in Pergamum, Thyatira and Sardis, in which the Lord found so much to censure and condemn, there were also some things that drew His approval and commendation.

What, then, are some of the fruits of that tree of Nicolaitanism which has had the longest time to develop and to bring forth seed after its own kind?

Among them we mention the following:

1. The substitution of the *Church*,—an *Ecclesiastical System*, for *God*, as the supreme object of love, faith and obedience.

2. "Taking away the key of knowledge,"—the Word of the living God, and substituting therefor the "Lives of the Saints,"\* the Catechism, the decrees of Church councils, the declarations of Popes, bishops and priests,—"the precepts of *men*."

3. For the grace, the presence and the intercession

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\*Undoubtedly "The Lives of the Saints" are included in the prophecy in 2 Tim. iv:4. The rendering of the Greek word *mythoi* by "fables" in all our English Bibles is most unsatisfactory and inadequate. The Greek word *mythos*, from which comes our English word "myth," is a *generic* term and means *any* work of fiction, and was not used specifically to designate *fables*,—such writings as those of Aesop and La Fontaine. The word *mythoi* in 2 Tim. iv:4, we believe, should be understood to include all works of fiction,—Lives of the Saints, Fairy Tales, books of romance, novels, drama and dramatic representations. Let the reader also observe that the "itching ears," spoken of in verse 3, are not those of the teachers, but of the *people* (Rev. Ver.), who will insist on being "tickled" or entertained. What a fearful indictment, then, is 2 Tim. iv:3, 4 against the Christian Church of the present day!



of Christ our Great High Priest, they have substituted the "grace of Mary," her mediation and intercession, and the intercession of "the blessed Michael the Archangel, the blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints."

4. They have substituted the arts of the politician and diplomat and the intrigues of ecclesiasts for the sanctifying presence, indwelling, guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

5. The Confessional and prayers to the saints have been substituted for "the throne of grace."

6. They have substituted the merit of penances and indulgences for the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth us from all sin.

7. A so-called righteousness of men,—the merit of good works, has been substituted for "the righteousness of God," in accordance with which the believer is justified *freely* [that is, without money, without works, and without penances or indulgences], *FREELY, by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. iii:24).

8. Nor is this all. Having established and perfected a great ecclesiastical hierarchy under their own control, and regardless of the words of Christ when He said "My kingdom is not of this world," they have put forth their hand to gain control of temporal power, that by means of the strong arm of civil authority they may compel obedience to the mandates of this great hierarchy. In this we behold a Dual Alliance between Church and State, some of the natural and

perfect fruits of which are to be seen in the Inquisition, the Massacres of St. Bartholomew's day, and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

What wonder is it, then, that Christ should say that He "hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans!" But be of good courage, beloved, for "thus saith He that hath the sharp two-edged sword" to the church in Pergamum: "Repent, therefore, or else I will come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth." We may therefore wait patiently for Him to act, while we breathe to God the prayer of the Psalmist, "It is time for Jehovah to work, for they have made void thy law" (Ps. cxix:126).

In the judgment threatened in the Letter to Pergamum, as also in the one threatened upon Thyatira, we have confirmation of what has been said in regard to the representative character of these seven Churches and the prophetic character of the seven Letters. Of the words "I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth" it is to be said that this is not the way Christ has dealt with apostate churches thus far (see Rev. xxii:11, first half); and besides, Chap. xix:15 (compare 2 Thes. i:7, 8) indicates that this mode of punishment belongs to the time of the Parousia. So also the threatened judgment pronounced upon Thyatira can find its great fulfillment only in the days of the Tribulation; for any fulfillment of these threats in the past would have been by judgments so extraordinary in their nature and degree as to receive mention by the historians of the time.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER V.

*Insert after first paragraph page 89.*

FOR another proof that the Church includes both Old and New Testament saints, compare Gen. iii:15 with Rom. xvi:20. The woman spoken of in Gen. iii:xv can be none other than Eve. "The seed of the Woman," without doubt, refers to Christ, *primarily*, but in a secondary and wider sense, and in the light of Rom. xvi:20, can there be any doubt it also includes the *members of His body*,—the saints? For in the latter passage it is said "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Since then the seed of Eve in the Christian Church are to have part with Christ in the bruising of Satan, is it not practically unthinkable that none of "the seed of the woman" *before* the time of Christ should participate in that glorious event? Once more, then, we are confirmed by the Scriptures in the belief that the Church was in existence and present on the earth in Old Testament times.

Again we invite the careful attention of the reader to the important bearing of three verses in Matthew upon the relation of the Church to the Old and New Testament dispensations:

1. Matt. xvi:19,—“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

2. xxi:43,—“The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

3. xxiii:13,—“But woe unto you, scribes and Phari-

sees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter."

It will be seen at a glance that these three verses are closely related to one another. xxi:43 speaks of the transfer of a stewardship from Israel to the Christian Church. The "Nation" here mentioned is the "holy nation" of 1 Pet. ii:9. Matt. xvi:19 refers to this same stewardship, speaks of the same kingdom and of this same nation, in its designated representative, Peter. xxiii:13 gives the reason why God was about to take away the kingdom from the representatives of Israel. They had been unfaithful stewards and had used the keys to shut the kingdom of God against Israelites and also against Gentiles (Rom. ii:23, 24). Keys are a sign of stewardship, and their transference to Peter, as the appointed representative of the Christian Church, would be a sign of the transference of the kingdom.

It is obvious that these keys had already been formally delivered to Peter when, on the day of Pentecost, he opened the kingdom of God to three thousand sons of Israel in one day, and when, a little later, he used these keys to open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, when Cornelius and the little company of Romans were converted in Cæsarea.

Several important conclusions lie open as the day upon the very surface of these verses thus brought together.

1. That the keys which Peter received had been hitherto in the custody of the representatives of Israel.

2. That the Christian Church was henceforth to sustain the same relation to the kingdom of heaven that Israel as a nation had enjoyed hitherto.

3. That the Church of God was not a "brand-new" creation on the day of Pentecost, as some have assumed. What was new on that day was the gift of the Holy Spirit as the abiding Paraclete,—our Comforter, Guide, Sanctifier and Partner, who had been given to the Christian Church as a permanent and divine witness to the resurrection, ascension and life of Christ in heaven, in His mediatorial work as our Great High Priest.

If we think of the "Church" as *the body of believers*, then we shall have no difficulty with the word, and we shall be able to see that the relation of the body of believers to the Kingdom is substantially the same, in the present dispensation, that it was under former dispensations. This leaves us free to recognize and rejoice in the peculiar blessings and privileges granted to us in the new dispensation, above anything that was known in former times.

Let us remember that the word for church in the Greek (*Ecclesia*) was also used many times in the Septuagint in speaking of an assembly or chosen body of God's people, and let us also remember that the Scriptures contain no definition of the word "church" nor any description of it such as would justify the assumption that is sometimes made, that it can apply only to the body of believers gathered out of the world between Pentecost and the pre-tribulation resurrection and rapture of the saints.

It may have been noticed that in the last two pages we have used the terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" interchangeably. This was done with deliberation, *because the two terms are interchangeable and synonymous*. Both refer to the same kingdom. One term, however, calls attention to the fact that God is the Ruler of the kingdom, while the other term calls attention, rather, to the *sphere* in which God's rule is undisputed and in which He has His habitation.

But since, in recent years, many have fancied that there is a wide distinction between them, and inasmuch as such a distinction, real or fancied, would and *does* affect materially and vitally the question of the authority and application to the Christian of many a passage in the first Gospel, let the careful student take his Bible and a good concordance and, like the wise Bereans of old, "examine the Scriptures" for himself "whether these things are so." He would soon discover that it is peculiar to the style of Mark and Luke to use always the term "kingdom of God," or simply "the kingdom," and also peculiar to the style of Matthew to use, *generally*, the term "kingdom of heaven," or simply "the kingdom." He will find, moreover, that in the parallel passages, when the full expressions are used, Matthew almost invariably uses "kingdom of *heaven*" while the other two always use "kingdom of *God*."

Or, if one has no concordance conveniently at hand, let him compare Matt. iv:17 with Mark i:15; Matt. v:3 with Luke vi:20; Matt. xi:11 with Luke vii:28; Matt. xiii:11 with Mark iv:11 and Luke viii:10;



Matt. xiii:31 with Mark iv:30, 31 and Luke xiii:18, 19; Matt. xiii:33 with Luke xiii:20, 21; Matt. xix:14 with Mark x:14 and Luke xviii:16 and, finally, Matt. xix:23, 24 with Mark x:23-25 and Luke xviii:24, 25. *All these comparisons are between passages that are strictly parallel.* But notice the significant wording of Matt. xix:23, 24: "Verily I say unto you, it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of HEAVEN, and again (notice the word 'again')," "I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

What more need be said to demonstrate the utter futility of all attempts to build anything substantial, in the way of teaching, upon a distinction that does not exist.

Our readers may, therefore, still find comfort and delight in the assurance that Matthew's Gospel is no more intended for *Israel, under another dispensation*, than are the other three Gospels, and that it (the *whole* of it) is as truly a gift from God to us *now*, in the present time, for our daily profit and guidance, as any other portion of the Scriptures.



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